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BY

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CHAPTER I

IN MY own defence I would like to explain that a long while ago I wrote a book called *A Bug's-Eye View of the War*. I didn't write it on purpose. We were on the Rhine. The captain was nabbing me for extra detail every time I turned around. I got pretty sick of it, and when the fellow saviours of my country elected me as historian of their heroic deeds I jumped at the chance. After all, life is short, and one gets fed up grooming eight mules a day.

I forgot that the book might fall into the hands of our wives and sweeties and went the whole hog, at first. Nothing was soft-pedalled; nothing left out. At last the proof sheets were ready. In a spirit of good clean fun I sent them to the colonel for his approval. He let out a yell that could be heard as far as the Lithuanian cemetery and began jumping up and down on my stomach. It was too bolshevik, he thought; too disrespectful, too disorderly, too everything.

I have a weakness for the colonel—he was a swell soldier—so I lopped ten good pages out of the manuscript.

The captain came next. He seemed to feel that I had pounded a little on the subject of wine and women. I toned *that* down. And after corresponding interviews with the major, the Y. M. C. A., the Red Cross, and several ministers of the Gospel, the record got to be something like *The Rover Boys in the White Mountains.*

It was privately published and achieved a circulation of nearly four hundred copies, all subscribed for. The men were sore as goats. They felt the revised version made them look like little ladies and gentlemen, whereas in the history of the entire world there was never such a husky horde of heroes. Although most of them were college men it wasn't their fault, and they met the disadvantage by growing whiskers, spitting through their teeth, and remaining in the ranks until the end of the war.

They played dirty in and out of action and ate up the war. With half a chance the Rainbow Division could have busted through Berlin in 1917 and eaten Armistice Day dinner in China—or let's say Japan. That's why the Allies put up all those barbed wire entanglements—to keep us back. Ask the Germans. Ask anybody. Ask *us*.

Those Germans had pet names for the Rainbow beside which Devil Dog sounds like Sissy. The most conservative was Cholera. Incidentally, the Marines made up the name Devil Dogs themselves.

If a simple record of what we did will demonstrate Who Won the War, here it is as originally written, with no nosey officers around to censor it. Personally, I'm against its publication; but, since the publishers threaten to print it anyhow they might as well have the original and unadulterated version. Here goes:

Bingen, Germany, December, 1918.

We reached France just like ordinary soldiers, packed in the coal bunkers of the *President Lincoln* so tight that you couldn't talk without biting off somebody's ear, and a man had to be a contortionist to make a pass at craps. We slept in four layers, like a birthday cake. Every time the ship rolled, the entire battery did a trapeze act.

We had been recruited during the summer from Chicago and the University of Illinois, christened the 149th Field Artillery, and added to the Rainbow Division. The entire division sailed in one convoy in October, 1917. Somewhere in midocean the *President Grant,* bearing the Alabama regiment of infantry, turned again home. The wigwag rumours were to the effect that the boys had chucked a couple of officers overboard. The disappointing explanation later on was Engine Trouble.

The trip occupied thirteen days—rather uneventful days, although Captain Bruce Benedict did his best to make them exciting. Every day and night he predicted a submarine attack for the following ten minutes; and as we were in the direct centre of the ship, below the water line, he assumed we were *it* for tag. With real concern he directed our course. The

Strong were to rescue the Weak. We were to wear our woollen mittens as a means of coping with the cold, wet ocean. We were to draw our pistols as we went over the side and shoot the submarine crew. We were to be brave.

Following this excellent advice Captain Johnson of Supply Company addressed his men, who lived in the same coal bunker. Captain Johnson announced that everything Captain Benedict had said applied to Supply Company *except:* that he wanted no sissies in his outfit, and if there were any weak guys who couldn't save themselves, good-bye and good luck.

Furthermore, if he caught any of his men coming out on deck with mittens he would drown them himself. As for shooting at the submarine crew, Supply Company could use its judgment. Fists, in Captain Johnson's opinion, were better. Captain Johnson's brave words usually came to an end at this point, due to the frequent dislodgement of his false teeth, which were often found a good thirty-five feet from his position on the companionway. They were seldom returned as without them Captain Johnson was powerless to issue orders or deliver reprimands. By freezing on to them Supply Company often got a day's vacation.

All of us were very fond of Captain Johnson. He was so damned fierce and soldierly. Every morning he descended the companionway and bawled: "Supply Company! ALL OUT!" And every morning the boys would throw shoes and mess kits and tell him to soak his head. A pause invariably followed—it was too dark to identify any of the hooligans—and then, more softly:

"I'll give you five minutes more."

Another barrage of equipment. Another pause. The inevitable end was:

"Aw, fellows, won't you please get up for poor old Captain Johnson?"

From the beginning of the war Colonel Henry J. Reilly did his best to scrape him off. Not because of his character—he was a fanatic hero, always seeking chances to die gloriously, charging into exploding ammunition dumps, rushing to exposed points, doing his damnedest to become a hero or an angel—he didn't care which. He was physically unfit, however. Occasionally he was transferred, but a cable to Jim Ham Lewis, then Senator from Illinois, invariably conquered all.

"Dear Jim," you would hear him dictating to the company clerk. "I have just come back from the front, and my boots are bloody with the blood of my own men."

Such messages usually came from the training sector, with saloon fights representing the only known carnage. But they always worked. As quickly as Captain Johnson was relieved, he was back on the job, beaming with joy.

We reached St. Nazaire October 31st with only two men under arrest. They had been caught fishing through the ventilating funnels in the cook's galley with a rope and a bent nail. With this primitive instrument a large sausage vat had been completely emptied before the cooks called out the guard.

Five days after the ship had docked we were still under quarantine on board, lowering dollar bills in campaign hats in exchange for apples and bars of chocolate, watching the accompanying destroyers slide into the locks of the Loire, and wigwagging to the sailors on shore for definite information as to whether champagne was really ninety-five cents a quart. Interest was continually excited by the countless women in black, the long gray-green caterpillars of German prisoners on their way to work, and the red-legged French territorials who escorted them.

After the first day in port dock details gave ambitious members of the battery a chance to say they had touched foot to French soil first—as if there was a chance that the boat would turn back to the States without allowing them to land.

At last debarkation orders came down. The regiment marched off the boat. We cheered the sailors. The sailors cheered us. Commander Sterling of the *Lincoln* made a speech. Little Sylvester, the band leader, blew out his chest and started up "Sambre et Meuse." The band had been practising it every day since we mobilized, in anticipation of this great moment.

Apparently the French, although it was their own music, didn't think it was any great shakes. They watched us curiously and without applause while we slogged up a four-kilometre hill to a so-called rest camp—hep, hep, hep—with that damned Frog music running 165 steps to the minute.

That rest camp was hot stuff. It had been raining for weeks, and we sagged knee deep in soupy mud. In the barracks the mud was a foot deep. Unaccustomed to hiking after a *bon voyage* on the ocean wave, our first thoughts were of beds and beans.

We got the beans, but Battery D found the straw pile first, and that led to a tired cat-and-dog fight. We won, and retired in a variety of straw chowder at 6 P. M. For the first and last time in the history of the organization passes to town were turned down. This despite early soap-bubble stories of cognac, wild women, and pretty scenery.

Early the next morning some bright baby with stars on his shoulders and mush in his head—a wife beater in his heart—ordered us to march on a reservoir five miles from camp with picks, shovels, water wings, and boots. There the axiom that "you'll never get rich, you so-and-so," was richly rubbed in.

Heroes? In a pig's eye! We dug like dagoes at that grand cañon among reservoirs for three days, with a lot of regular army officers yapping at us to dig faster. The reservoir had been started by the first contingent of Marines—gold-bricks who later swelled around in Paris, pinching honest privates; and our completion of the task led to the supposition that again the National Guard was being called upon to finish something the Marines began.

Spare time at this garden spot was filled with hardtack, corned willie, drills, details, and lectures on the Perils of Pleasure by Eminent Y. M. C. A. Workers. It wasn't until November 11th that we got a break and were ordered to the training camp.

This was Coetquidan in Brittany—the most ghastly blight in all geography. Getting there was pleasant enough. The magic lantern railroad trains with their *"Hommes 40, Chevaux 8,"* were new then, and strange. Every toot and squeal of the engine was imitated vocally down the line of cars. As long as daylight held out we poked our heads through each other's shins, and each farmer and crossing guard got a yell and a *"Veev la France!"*

Such girls as we rattled past (provided they were from six to sixty) were treated to endearments that varied with individual enthusiasts. Rush Dyer, our most effective Romeo, was hoarse in an hour and had to revert to sign language. Windmills, canals, and châteaux were loudly pointed out as windmills, canals, and chat-oos by the better informed.

The next day we hit Coetquidan, a pile of tarpaper sheds floating in a mud puddle. We were given a set of shacks lately inhabited by German prisoners and put to work clearing them out. They were lousy, wet, and cold. For three days we struggled, digging up the dirt floors and spraying them with disinfectant, whitewashing and spraying the walls, paper windows, and paper ceilings, and fumigating the results.

Since vermin habitually dropped from the ceiling, we had our heads shaved; which inspired some of the boys to leave scalp locks and fancy designs. Until they were seized and forcibly barbered a couple of guys wrought emotional havoc among the native women by palming themselves off as Red Indians. Every woman in Brittany seemed consumed with a movie-fostered passion for Heap Big Chiefs at the moment, and the scalp locks maintained an unbeatable edge for a week.

A few days later we had our first mail. Concerning this event all the hooplas of stage and screen and story are true. We went wild. Our feelings weren't at all affected by the assurance of our friends and relatives—all of them right on the Inside—to the effect that the rainbow Division would spend the winter right on Long Island, that the war was virtually over, and that we would never see France, etc. These bright hunches had been addressed to Camp Mills and forwarded.

In November, 1917, Rennes—forty kilometres from camp—was a swell place to visit, with or without leave. The people were hospitable; the town was picturesque; the hotels were good. Moreover, the women were not any too good.

By doing a fast 220 from the railroad station to the town the privates usually beat the officers to the most desirable places, which contributed a great deal to the pleasure of the trip. Baths were there, too—*bains,* if you would rather—with great tubs, lined with muslin and brimming with hot water. If curiosity moved you to press the bell that dangled in front of your nose a girl popped in and began rubbing your back, a phenomenon that caused an abominable stage fright among the men. They complained that it was indecent and just like the Frogs.

For no reason, a passion for omelettes developed among visitors to Rennes. Literally, one man thought nothing of a twelve-egg omelette, and where two or three were gathered together fifty- and sixty-egg omelettes were often demanded, to the amazement of the French. On top of this a small dinner party could easily handle a dozen fried squab and live to make overtures toward the waitress. This was done as a matter of course and had nothing to do with the intentions, good or bad, of the dinner party. It was part of the evening—like cognac and cigars.

No record of the war is complete without at least one variant of the following episode:

Throughout one of these little celebrations Bud Boyles entertained four or five of the boys with various speculations on an extremely charming waitress. It was decided that she was the modern counterpart of Camille, and, under pretense of complaining about the service, he got pretty hot and bothersome in his talk.

Army life simplifies amusement, and the boys were suffocating until he tried to light a cigarette with a trick French briquet. Pausing in his appraisal of the young lady, he observed that the French ought to lose the war for that one invention, the briquet. Whereat the waitress said, in exquisite English:

"Perhaps it is because you have no essence."

Five soldiers, who really were gentlemen under their tan, died on the spot. Mademoiselle explained that she was born in Canada and educated at St. Agnes'.

That was *always* happening—as, for instance, when one of the boys, counting on his horrible English, gravely asked an elderly Frenchwoman where he could find some wild women. With perfect composure and charm, the old lady told him: "Two blocks down and to the right. Ask for Marie."

At this distance of months and battles we regard Rennes as the scene of our salad days. Getting there was such a picnic. The only means of transportation was a narrow-gauge railroad, eighteen inches between rails, and sporting a conductor who wore more gold lace than Foch. The hoodlums soon discovered how to kick over the air brake on the back platform at a point in the journey where the train did a regular roller-coaster dip. With no air the toy engine would rush down the grade until it reached the upward incline, then roll back and forth on both slopes like a rocking chair until the engineer jumped out and put a rock on the track.

For fifteen minutes thereafter he was sure to wave his arms and scream at the gold-plated conductor, who waved his arms and screamed back. Expert translators informed us that both engineer and conductor regarded the entrance of America into the war as the worst lot of boloney they had ever heard of, that Lafayette was a chump, Wilson a maniac, Pershing a pest, and so on, until the air brake was repaired. This performance went on every night at the same steep valley—although the joke was always reserved for the ride home: none of us wanted to be late for Rennes.

There wasn't much fun at the camp. At the bottom of the hill on which we sweated and drilled and dug was a ring of the usual put-up-in-a-hurry shacks for the sale of red-eye at prescribed hours. These were operated by thrifty coin shepherds of a doubtful class, who wreathed their establishments patriotically with French and American flags and proceeded to gyp the pants off of us. There were the Franco-American Bar, the Lafayette Bar, the Star-Spangled Banner Saloon, and others still more vociferously pro-Ally. Before we had been in camp a week a real enterprising gentleman moved in and opened up the Stars and Stripes Saloon—a hard-boiled egg free with every drink.

The opening was a pretentious affair, and when it was discovered that this Foxy Grandpa among saloon-keepers had installed a wooden rail in front of the bar and mirrors in back of it, he couldn't handle the business.

Of course, there were some nondrinkers in the outfit. They were big idealists, mostly; men who could tell you what the war was about from a standpoint of anthropology, philosophy, and evolution. And a volunteer Y. M. C. A. worker who chided the boys gently for singing "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam" and making light of Things Eternal. Somehow, he managed to spread morality and remain popular—a rare stunt for a corporal. Also Kenneth MacFarland, who increased the battery's rating On High by intensive study of the Bible and the classics. Kenneth could recite all of Paradise Lost—and *would* if we weren't careful. And the officers confided that the most rowdy were given to the most Christian letters home.

The great event of those early days was the arrival of the guns—four sweet little 75's, painted green and buff and black. Wicked little babies, the counterparts of our clumsy 18-pounders. Before the war was over we'd learned to fire them at the rate of thirty-two shells a minute. Now there was great excitement and bitter competition for places on the gun crews. A tentative firing battery was selected, and we spent endless days "firing" with wooden shells. Tiresome, and endurable only because of nightly drinking and the possibilities suggested by the Field Artillery Drill Regulations.

This invaluable little book virtually prescribes when and how and in what order a cannoneer must die. Number One man, according to the book, falls first. He is succeeded by Number Two, then Three, then Four, who is ordered finally to draw his pistol, blow up the gun by a device with which we were acquainted, and then "to sell his life as dearly as possible." It is all very grim and real and, under its spell, tentative Number One men took on a look of too good for this world that got them many a sock on the nose before they had fired a shot.

The seriousness of dummy drill was fantastic and slightly fanatic. It was lightened only by small social events within the battery. Captain Benedict was ordered to the staff officers' school, and First Lieutenant Howard R. Stone took charge.

Thanksgiving came and went, and everybody got a pound of real turkey—present from the War Department. We prowled the reputed Forest of Merlin near by for holly and mistletoe. Harry Papolis, operator of a one-arm lunch in Illinois, who had been brought to France under the impression that Greeks were good cooks, managed to make the turkey edible; and enough beer and light wine were on hand to complete the celebration.

Over in D Battery street, the band played the damned "Sambre et Meuse," and the wastrels got fried. A pageant of the drinking element was formed, and wound through the barracks with an idea of harassing the temperance group. It was led by Joe Yacullo, representing himself as an Italian organ grinder, with Rush Dyer scampering about in the rôle of monkey. When the God-fearing few objected they were thrown out of their quarters bodily. MacFarland, up to his old tricks of reciting poetry, got some triple sec in his eye, which dampened his intellectual ardour for at least three days.

Drills, drills, drills, drills, and finally December 5th, when we did our first firing. Early in the afternoon we set out for the range. Two circumstances are noteworthy. One was that the cannoneers rode out on top of the carriages. Had a cannoneer climbed on a gun carriage in the last days of the war, when our horses were dying faster than we could cut them out of the harness, he would have been shot, then court-martialled at the first stop. Second was the pep of these same nags. Just before the Armistice the last horse died and went to heaven, and we hauled our guns around by hand—miles sometimes.

We fired from a hillside three kilometres from camp. Lines were strung, trail circles dug, and the cannoneers looked as important as possible. So did the general and Pappy Le Prohon, the genial cannibal who was our first lieutenant, firing executive, father, and friend. The order came down. Pappy repeated it as if the world would be destroyed by the subsequent salvo. The guns went off. So did the gunners, who thought the little iron saddles on the trail were things to sit on. It is no fun getting thrown off a 75, but Pappy didn't take that into consideration. He yelled terrible things in his funny French Canuck accent (most of them threats to kill).

"My Gawd!" he bawled, as the cannoneers displayed a little more reserve in their art. "Git back on them guns! Ride 'em! Tame 'em! You so-and-so-and-so!"

And, smiling, the boys fell dead—or wished they had. There wasn't enough liniment in France to heal the backsides of those unhappy pioneers; nor did they feel any better when a committee of French soldiers, who had been watching the firing, asked them—in their quaint broken English—why in hell they sat on the guns. It seemed that the French never did.

Slow times until Christmas. More drills. Double stable duty with mean horses. The only compensation we had for their bites and sneaking kicks was that horse meat mysteriously began to appear as an item of the daily menu. Apparently the Service of Supply had failed, and when in France one does what the horse eaters do.

The camp was visited by two Australians who were playing hookey from their outfit. Bitterly they sought to enlighten us as to the real causes and conduct of the war; and in a fit of patriotism someone called out the guard and ran them ragged.

The camp was quarantined for two weeks, for no reason. The general who issued the order discovered that it was intended for another camp down in Marseilles, and lifted the quarantine.

Quartermaster Sergeant Jones discovered that his shack wouldn't accommodate all the battery supplies, and the men were ordered to move them to a new quartermaster's office, four blocks away. Having accomplished this in one Sunday, it was decided to move the anvils, kegs of nails, saddles, and so on, back again—because of a fancied lack of ventilation. The third Sunday was used up moving the tons of property to still another office adjoining that of the regimental quartermaster sergeant (supposedly because he was an old friend with whom Jones loved to talk while pairing up Size 44 shirts with Number 18 drawers).

Christmas. Dissipation started after morning stables and lasted until some time the following morning. In each barracks there were piles of wrapping paper, excelsior, and red ribbon at least ten feet high. Gifts from home consisted of everything for which we had no possible use—joke books, hymn books, necktie racks, stomach warmers, electric toasters, cuff links, and Paris garters.

One gent received a Sam Browne belt from a highly optimistic admirer. He traded it to Lieutenant Stone for a safety razor and a pass to Rennes.

George Daugherty's box from home contained several cans of corned beef—our deadly daily diet for more than a month. He had to be strapped down.

Dinner was a terrific affair. Ross Brown, a baker in civil life, worked all night long making doughnuts and pie, and Scotty Langlands brought out the jam he had been hiding for six weeks—thereby acquitting himself of certain dark suspicions. (It was the custom of mess sergeants and Greek cooks to make great headway with the local ladies by presents of army dainties. It was a rare virtue that could resist a quarter of beef during the war.)

The German prisoners, who played the garbage cans daily for titbits not included in the French *table d'hôte,* went crazy. They stood about us, knee-deep in mud, as we tore into the turkey, and there wasn't a man in the battery who didn't split a wishbone with a Kraut.

Well, one man, George Daugherty, embittered by his present of monkey meat, and having the issues of war deep in his heart, presented a mess kit filled with spare parts of turkey to two prisoners, and, just as they reached for it, hurled it into the garbage can with a rousing, *"Deutschlander Schwein!"*

George's bitterness was shared by the French commandant, who paused in his rounds, screamed that we were pro-German, and scattered the hungry Heinies with violent kicks in the pants. Otherwise, it was a Day of Love. Even the little Greek was affected by the Christmas spirit and offered a second helping without once reaching for the cleaver.

A war college was formed in the evening to work out certain reforms in the administration of the A. E. F. Measures involving the sale of alcoholics were discussed (owing to the regimental restrictions some of us were then drinking horse liniment cut with water) and many improvements in our relations with the officers were voted upon. All was harmonious until it was discovered that three of the boys wanted to play General Pershing at the same time. All refused to resign. Calm was restored by commissioning everybody present with the full rank of general. The paramount question of the evening was: What Shall We Do with the Buck Private? And the answer, somewhat confined to the verbiage of war, became our slogan thereafter.

Three days after Christmas 100 men from the battery were ordered to St. Nazaire to rustle 470 wild horses for the regiment. Captain Irving Odell was in charge. The trip was made by rail, the detail arriving in St. Nazaire late at night. Here we were met by Pappy Le Prohon, who had been assigned to remount work; and lest we had forgotten his admirable discipline he began yelling his heart out on all subjects. In sixty breathless seconds Pappy employed 100 beautiful although unnecessary expressions, impossible to repeat or remember, and laid everybody cold on the matter of missing buttons, dirty shoes, and sloppy salutes. Then his affection for us got the upper hand and he was Old Pie again.

We visited the remount station and got four horses apiece. The next job was to saddle without getting kicked out of the corral. A few accomplished it by dint of slugging the horses on the nose. There were never such horses. They kicked, bit, reared, tied themselves into lovers' knots, and unwound miraculously into four heel kicks if you so much as looked at them. Some of the men had never seen a horse before; but then some of the horses had never seen an artilleryman before—so it was an even break.

Under the eye of Pappy, though, anything was possible, and before long we had them saddled and roped and were charging through the business section of St. Nazaire. Here the horses went completely pro-German, running up and down the sidewalks, kicking in the plate glass windows, knocking over vegetable stands, and winding the string horses around every telephone pole in town. The natives—those who didn't run to their cellars—joined with the gendarmes in re-forming the parade, and the march resumed.

Once out of the city limits—God knows how we got there—the horses became attracted by the green fields and began jumping fences and ditches with an agility that was wonderful to behold. When one horse got into a field of expensive vegetables he whistled for his pals, and the round-up began all over again.

One guy found himself sitting on a saddle in the middle of the road with no horse under the saddle. Another was unwrapped from every telegraph pole on the road. It was a regular game of tag.

Herb Mooney was sometimes on his horse and sometimes on various bushes and barbed wire fences. Every time he pulled himself together he complained bitterly of the war and J. P. Morgan, who supposedly had ordered our participation in it. The eighth time he sailed over the head of his nag he said he didn't know that transfer to the flying corps could be made without the consent of the soldier.

Brick Bristol had the worst time. Every time he began chasing his steed, the horse turned around and chased him.

The trip took three days and nights and did a lot to explode the old theory that if a man doesn't like a horse there is something the matter with him. We had a diverting set-to with Captain Odell in a town called La Gacilly when he announced that we might patronize the town's one restaurant provided that we made no noise and allowed him to eat first. The razzberry was deafening, and he had an omelette hung on his ear.

Further fun was the organization of mediæval troubadour parties by Rush Dyer. Slightly boiled, we visited people's houses, rapped on the windows, and sang good old American ditties like "The Raggedy Cadets" and "Never Trust a Soldier." Charmed, the natives asked us in and poured extensively. We explained that the ballads were mammy songs and finished with "The Cannoneers Have Hair in Their Ears" to the tempo and expression of "My Old Kentucky Home." Our hosts were much moved.

We got back to camp New Year's Eve and celebrated in the traditional way. Nobody got to bed. In the morning Lieutenant Stone began the year right by presenting Pocket Testaments. On the flyleaf of each was a confession of faith, newly signed with our names by the good ladies of the Champaign Home Missionary Society, donors of the Testaments. They had been shipped under the label of Ordnance.

On January 5th, eleven days late, Santa Claus gave us five new officers. They were First Lieutenants Walter Erlich, Ralph Kelly, and Hugh Webster, and Second Lieutenants Walter Radford and Andrew Webster. The last named suffered from acute sensibilities and a perpetual desire to assert his rank. It was rumoured that he had caused himself to be tattooed with gold bars before leaving America, for fear of sleepwalking or something. The day he joined the battery he was required, in discharge of his duties as censor, to run over a letter written by Andy Gartner to a girl friend in the United States. To insure its original contents, Andy added this postscript:

"If anything is cut out of this letter, let me know and I will soften the censor's skull with my bare hands till you can hang it up with clothespins. I'll sock him on the nose," etc.

Lieutenant Webster crashed into the battery street demanding to know who was going to punch his nose. Unwilling to lose out on something good, a dozen volunteers ran for Gartner. In the interim the boys proposed 75's at ten paces with disinterested crews. But Lieutenant Webster was holding out for an apology. Gartner refused. It ended in a tie.

Since our first range fire, early in December, the battery had been firing on an average of three times a week, drills and details filling up holes in the programme. When we fired it was at three in the morning, so that we might simulate sneaking up on the enemy when he wasn't looking. Nine times out of ten it rained. But we were getting good and were itching for war. More doldrums. An E Battery man died, and Sylvester got a chance to play Chopin's Funeral March, which he had been dismally practising for weeks. Of course "Sambre et Meuse" was spilled again on the way back, although there wasn't a Frenchman in miles.

Marking time. On January 11th Lieutenants Newton Kimball and George Wegner were assigned to the battery. We had more officers than men by this time. Lieutenant Clarence Skinner, God's Gift to the A.E.F., was wished on us the same day. A bath book was established whereby the Spartan souls who doused themselves in one of the water buckets at headquarters could immortalize themselves by signing their names. We whiled away the boredom with interbarracks pillow fights after taps, loading the pillows with mess kits, rocks, and horseshoes.

Not a night passed without several warriors getting knocked cold. One barracks invaded another, which called for sly plans and nifty strategy. Such pillows as were captured were kept as trophies until the next night.

These battles, which became quite vicious as barracks spirit developed, were ended by rumours that at last we were going to the front. New activities confirmed it. We were worked twenty-six hours a day, with inspections under full pack in our spare time. There were gas-mask drills, and we were led through gas-filled dugouts to get used to the sensation. We simulated loading gun carriages on flat cars by staking out rectangular patches of grass and pretending they represented the Paris-Orléans limited. Barracks bags were packed with extra clothes, boots, and cartons of cigarettes for use in the trenches. Naturally we never saw them again.

On February 10th we began moving battery equipment to the town of Guer to be loaded on flat cars. The work went on until four o'clock the next morning. The same day we had a stiff hike with full equipment. The men were so bushed on their return that they flopped on their cots without removing their haversacks. It began to look like war.

All kinds of quarantines were established. All kinds of rumours went the rounds. Finally February 18th rolled around, as it has a habit of doing, and we got under way. There was an impromptu farewell party at the officers' mess—conveniently deserted for the occasion. Everybody yelled and made all the noise possible. Speeches were made and applauded wildly.

The top blew his whistle in the battery street. We formed and started down the long hill, singing "That's Where My Money Goes." At last we were getting somewhere.

CHAPTER II

IN FEBRUARY, 1918, it was against the law to leave for the front at a Christian hour, so reveille sounded at two-thirty in the morning. It was no hardship this time, because none of us had gone to bed. Roll call and a last breakfast.

The little Greek was released from quarters, to which he had been confined for swapping two sacks of army potatoes for a lady's favour. In a burst of repentance he cooked doughnuts.

Harness and hitch was accomplished in record time, in spite of officers. There was an epidemic of them that morning; all of them with a rush of orders to the mouth. Down the long hill to Guer, and horses and guns were loaded before you could say boo. A bitter snowball fight followed. Quite accidentally some of the new officers—the loudest—were casualties.

Hostilities ceased with the discovery of a straw stack, which was removed to the box cars for bedding over several Frogs' beautiful white bodies. Twenty-six men piled into each box car; Y. M. C. A. officials put out coffee and sandwiches free (believe it or not); the trick engine giggled and let out a small squeal; and we were off for death and glory, God and country, Berlin or bust.

The first one hundred miles were the hardest. Some mighty close harmony was going on, and it was pretty terrible. Matters were adjusted by moving the glee clubs into separate box cars, which made the rest available for some quiet gambling.

When a crap shooter cleaned the boys in his car he moved back to the next, until a first-class gambling hell was going on in the caboose, with a gentleman from Chicago big winner. He claimed to own a news stand, but nobody ever learned to roll the bones that way selling papers.

Rush Dyer and a couple of other Romeos spent the daylight hours making odd and amorous proposals to such red-hot mammas as appeared along the track, and considerable sight-seeing went on until night fell, when we stuck candles on our tin hats and warmed up issue beans and corn willie.

Some honest drinking went on, Jamaica rum chiefly. We acquired several gallons of cognac at the first *ravitaillement,* one of the coffee and cognac stations operated by the French government. The poilu in charge would sell a gallon for ten francs. He'd sell his eyes for twenty.

Three days of this nonsense, with the train sneaking up on Paris and all the big cities late at night, so that our heads wouldn't be turned by strange sights. Now and then we heard the rumble of guns far away, and conversation would turn to war.

But the most important issues touched on how long the Bull Durham would hold out, why they called it Sunny France, and where in hell did those dizzy new shavetails come from. Every Frenchman along the long, long trail got three rousing cheers, and when that form of fun wore out we took to shying beer bottles at cows, Savon Cadum signs, and stray gendarmes—thereby creating another bond between the rooster and the eagle.

When spirits drooped through sheer cramp and confinement Danny Elwell felt moved to slice adjacent eardrums with, "Are we happy?" at the top of his leather lungs. Supposedly the answer was a concerted "Yes!" but the boys (even the university contingent) were getting pretty sick of the rah-rah stuff, and we began to throw things.

Elwell took all the sounds and songs of his alma mater a bit seriously. At the drop of a hat he would start up the Illinois Loyalty Song, demanding that the noncollegiate section of the battery likewise stand and uncover. As first sergeant he got away with this sort of hooey at first, but not now. The first note of Loyalty became the signal for a bitter razz.

Three days out the train shuddered and stopped, and we were rolled out with the announcement that we had hit the war zone. A constant rumble formerly attributed to the flat wheels of the train now became a roar, and from the doors of the box cars we could see an airplane high above, peppered with white puffs.

Signs of death and glory littered the landscape. A shattered French plane stood on its ear near the roadbed. Shell craters, old and new, stared rudely. Hundreds of graves, eloquently grouped in threes and tens and twenties. Evidently the Germans weren't kidding.

We lay on a siding, forty miles from Lunéville, our destination. All the unpleasant manifestations of dirty work revived our officers' happy hunches that (*a*) we would detrain under shellfire; (*b*) we would detrain in a cloud of poison gas; and (*c*) we wouldn't detrain at all, as the Germans would see us first and send us sky high with a few well directed 42's. It was all very discouraging.

Nothing happened for hours, during which we loafed up and down the tracks and attempted conversation with a bunch of Italian soldiers who were guzzling garlic, salami sausage, and odds and ends of horse boiled over a bonfire. They had run on the Piave and were doing manual labour for punishment. Our battery Garibaldis spoke to them and reported some bitterness. They implied that war wasn't any good and advised us to pick up our marbles and go home.

At last the train crawled forward. Late in the afternoon we reached Lunéville, where we unloaded horses, wagons, and guns and sneaked up a side street to the Château Stanislas, an enormous castle in the centre of town, built by King Stanislas after he had been shagged out of Poland some time before.

The fact that Stan settled his court in Lunéville establishes him as a maniac, but there was plenty of other evidence to the same effect in and around the château. It was a regular Katzenjammer castle. We were assigned to the attic, six stories up, where there wasn't a board that wouldn't tip at a touch, revealing a nice long drop of 150 feet.

It made disposition of bottles, corpses, and so forth, rather convenient; but little feet had to be careful where they led us after a quart of grapejuice and six or eight *bières terribles*. The latter consisted of large goldfish globes, mounted on glass legs and filled with the old suds. (A customer had to dive inside for the last quart.) They were discovered eight minutes after the first passes were issued.

By the same strange process which made Meurcy Ferme "Murphy's Farm," the Ourcq River "O'Rourke," and the Rhine the "Ryan" later on in the war, Lunéville became "Looneyville" ten minutes after our arrival.

It was a dull town by day but grand at night, with many interesting social centres that we could visit provided we wore French uniforms. Consequently, impoverished poilus did a thriving business in the rental of blue helmets and overcoats. Fee, two francs an hour; three francs for two hours; and ten for the evening. Our own coats and helmets were kept for security.

The most popular reception was beer drinking in the cafés. These were identified by weird blue letters in the pitch-black streets and bulged with heroes who gloried and drank deep. Topics of conversation were the same for a week:

1. That the Rainbow Division was without parallel anywhere.

2. That the Heinies were duck soup for freeborn Americans.

3. That the Frogs were nuts to allow such an elegant sector as the Lorraine front to go to seed.

This last complaint was derived from the box score of the battle which greeted our arrival, as published in the Paris edition of the Chicago *Tribune*. With all that noise and iron flying around, a mere handful of men had been knocked off. It certainly looked as if somebody had been lying down on the job. One French battery had lost only two men. At that rate a man might live forever.

It was depressing, too, how lightly the inhabitants of Lunéville took the war. On Sundays they walked in the park and threw bread to the swans, quite oblivious to airplane duels overhead; and three times a week the rubes come in from the country with vegetables and souvenirs to sell, as if nothing was going on. That meant we had to scrub stables and park the horses in the courtyard until marketing was over.

We did most of the marketing ourselves, loading up on Swiss cheese, Basque berets, bum jackknives, et cetera, like halfwits. Items of female apparel got the best play, being suitable for souvenirs. Many a nice girl in the States received pale purple bloomers embroidered with the crossed flags of the Allies; chemises with beautiful sentiments stitched into violent pink folds; and other intimate odds and ends rather difficult to identify or explain.

Meanwhile the war waited and we began to get restless. In this period of marking time, Porch Climber MacMillan discovered two hundred feather beds in the chapel of the château—more than enough to go around. It took all that night to remove them to the attic.

Early the next morning there was a terrible hullabaloo in the courtyard. The French officers of the area, who had imported the mattresses from Paris, now discovered their loss. They went through the château like bloodhounds, following the trail of feathers until they reached our humble sixth floor quarters. One look at their property and they began yelling their hearts out.

Brick Bristol told a glittering colonel to button his nose, an unfortunate crack that didn't help matters any; no more than Harry Weir's spitting at several majors through his teeth. Harry was unusually expert in this art, throwing a stream so fine that it was invisible. All his targets were quite sodden before the argument ended.

In the end the Frogs called our officers and bellyached so loudly that we had to carry the feather beds back. One general looked as though he was going to cry.

The next important event was Lieutenant Pappy Le Prohon's transfer to the horseshoeing department—a matter of discipline. Being a French Canuck, Pappy spoke the lingo fairly well and had employed this talent in getting cozy with all the women in town.

The colonel heard about it, bawled hell out of him, and put him shoeing mules. Pappy had denounced so many of us for so much less that it seemed like poetic justice.

Finally, a week after our arrival, Lieutenant Stone was ordered to the front to pick out a battery position, and everything became mysterious once more. We packed all over again, shedding more and more of our fancy equipment. Pneumatic mattresses, portable typewriters, and canned delicacies are all right until you have to carry them. Solemn letters were written and surreptitiously handed to the chaplain for transmission in case of sudden death.

Four gun crews and a battery commander's detail were selected to accompany Lieutenant Stone to the front, and there were many touching farewells. The first ones slated to go got real snooty about it and said good-bye as if we were already their widows. There was a final inspection of equipment, especially identification tags. Lieutenant Stone spoke morbidly of their use, and toward noon the firing battery marched off. Four hours later the guns were installed in La Neuville-aux-Bois, a seedy collection of busted brick houses four thousand yards from the front line.

The village was dirty, lousy, dilapidated, and full of rats the size of St. Bernards. Fortunately the chicken-wire cots were a good two feet off the floor, but lay a shoe down by the side of the bed and the rats tore into it like lettuce.

There were fireplaces in a few of the buildings, and doors and window sills and plank floors made a merry blaze and served to heat our rations. When officers complained of telltale smoke we organized a raid on the Indiana six-inch artillery and stole half of their T. N. T., which makes a swell fire and has the advantage of being smokeless. Safe, too, as it explodes only when compressed.

Near by was a French Pinard station, from which someone promoted several cans of strong drink. Thus equipped we spread blankets and rolled out the bones. At the first pass a shell screamed over the tar-paper roof and caved in an adjacent bungalow. A dozen more zipped over—77's to judge by the scream and smack.

In a minute they were falling like meteors. Most of us were the sons of God-fearing parents, and you can't go to heaven with a pair of dice in your hand. Nor would it do to get right with God on the spot, in front of everybody. So we played on, shaking the bones with no effort of our own and calling on Little Joe to be a man and come out.

Toward morning the bombardment died down and we started digging gun pits. The position Lieutenant Stone picked out had been abandoned the week before by a French battery—nobody knew why until we started to work. *All* the French aren't nuts. When they walk out on a digging job it's because there's something pretty sour about it.

In this case it was the mud. After three days of heavy bailing it was only waist deep—and then it rained. And how! In four hours the country was a duck pond. Faithful to our homes, our oath, and the Constitution we bailed on and on, up to our necks, with Danny Elwell, perched in a tree, insanely bawling, "Are we happy?"

To rub it in, the little Greek, warm and safe and amorously engaged in Lunéville, shipped us a sack of soap instead of beef, proof of his activities in the department of Romance. We knew where that beef had gone. And the engineers dumped several tons of concrete blocks and steel beams in a mud lake five hundred yards from the so-called battery position. All of it had to be moved by hand.

It quit raining only to snow, and stopped snowing only to hail. Every pup tent was an igloo. Then the first gun crew struck an artesian well and completed the catastrophe.

The uselessness of going on became apparent, even to the officers, so we wheeled our guns to the Forest of Parroy and placed them on the fringe nearest the German lines. Our new position was as visible as the Woolworth Building but fairly dry; meaning that the mud was only two feet deep. And anybody would rather die from shellfire than drowning.

Five dire days had passed to no purpose, and the entries in the battery diaries were slightly pro-German. Apparently the war wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

The French furnished a little excitement by slinging some shells at the Germans before we got our protecting sandbags up. The Germans came back handsomely. Evidently, now that we had arrived, there was going to be no more clap in, clap out, or ring around the rosie.

From midnight till dawn the guns were cracking on every side. The ground rocked with explosions. The air sizzled with shell. A thousand jumping flashes threw their reflections on the low clouds for miles. Toward sunrise the show died down, with only an occasional burst like the sound of a steel shutter landing on a concrete floor, far, far away.

Shells had landed all around us, confirming our hunch that the Germans had our names, telephone numbers, and street addresses, but we remained in strange safety, although C Battery had the hell shot out of them and lost heavily in killed and wounded. So did a company of New York doughboys.

There was a let-up in the shooting, and twelve cannoneers were assigned to adjacent French batteries for firing practice. Under the supervision of the veterans of Verdun we were permitted to pink a few shells at registration marks and battle over who would be first to fire.

The French were swell. We were the first American *soldats* they had seen, and their hospitality was sincere and elegant. One of their corporals, a charming character who had been a croupier at Monte Carlo, introduced us to all the worthwhile boys and saw to it that we had free and frequent access to the Pinard supply. A toothless gentleman by the name of Pierre turned out to be excellent company until one of our gang cabbaged an entire suitcase full of liquor he had brought back from leave in Paris.

The French greatly admired the way we worked the guns. Verdun and the Marne had taught them to flop when they fired, whereas we sat on the side saddles and took the jolt like cowboys. Rus Dyer amazed them by snapping the firing pin with his fingers when one of the lanyards broke during a barrage.

Between pot shots we sat around and listened to hair-raising stories of Verdun: how our boy friends had fired into masses of German infantry at one hundred metres distance, how every other gun blew up, and a lot of other hows that made Lorraine look like a basket lunch.

It *was* pretty soft, at that, compared to all the fun that followed. Both the French and German divisions had come south for a rest and, except for occasional parties, were on terms of love and kisses. Whenever a smart American lieutenant intentionally missed a registration point and pegged a shell into a German kitchen there was hell to pay for a week.

The Germans would retaliate by bouncing a few six-inchers into French posts of command, and the French would complain bitterly to the Americans for starting it all. Consequently it was not fair to shoot Germans, although they paraded openly on their side of the line, making rude faces and noises at us.

Some Iowa boys took picks on a couple of them one day, with the result that the Germans sneaked over that night and stole a side of beef from an Iowa kitchen. They dragged a kitchen policeman along to carry it, what's more.

As this sort of feeling progressed the doughboys had to borrow French helmets and overcoats before they could venture out in No Man's Land. If an American helmet popped over the parapet it was a sieve in no time.

Meanwhile a swell war was going on in Lunéville, where the drivers and extra cannoneers awaited the call to arms. One of our exalted officers—we will call him Colonel McEgg-beater—back there had made a number of improvements in the art of war—improvements that benefited everybody.

For one thing, it occurred to him that armies would be much more efficient if they observed office hours. So he gave out that hereafter he was not to be disturbed on any matters relating to the war except from 9 A. M. to 5 P. M., when he would be glad to receive all generals, couriers, lieutenant colonels, and other duly accredited representatives of the Allied forces. This order was disregarded one day and Colonel McEgg-beater was furious. He immediately changed his billet, keeping his home address a secret from everybody, even his adjutant.

Two days later, General MacArthur decided on an attack. Colonel Reilly sent a courier flying with an order for all the ammunition in Lunéville. He arrived late at night, long after His Nibs was tucked in bed.

A lone private, with no authority to give out ammunition, was in the regimental office and explained that it was impossible to oblige with shells until the boss woke up the next morning. The courier had apoplexy, which rapidly became gangrene.

The attack was for the next afternoon. There was no ammunition. At last, the private dared destruction and forged McEgg-beater's name to the order, whereupon the caissons began to rattle over the cobbled streets toward the front and the day was saved.

Early the following morning (for he believed in punctuality) McEgg-beater was walking along the street with his adjutant when he saw the ammunition train making it's last trip.

"Well," he remarked optimistically, "it looks like we're getting relieved." (This joke was in circulation as early as February, 1918.)

The adjutant was doubtful and called to the first lead driver:

"What outfit, buddy?"

Later in the war the answer to this question, when propounded by curious officers, was "Buffalo Bill!" or "The Hunert an' One Ranch!" But at this time civility was still a byword and the driver replied:

"Hundred and Forty-ninth Field Artillery," adding, "sir."

"My God!" cried our mental giant. "My outfit! Where do you think you're going?"

"We've been," said the driver—"giddy-ap!—sir."

Colonel McE. rushed to his office and collared the unhappy private. It was an hour before he concluded his remarks on Leavenworth and the firing squad and saw how narrowly he had avoided something of the sort himself.

Thereafter he stuck to the rules and usages of war like Hindenburg, excepting in one particular. In the hottest section of the Argonne, just before the push to Sedan, he was often observed walking about the bloody fields in the moonlight wearing an old-fashioned nightshirt. It appeared that he was never without one.

The attack he nearly gummed up came off that morning, March 7th, and was the first in which the battery participated as a whole. All the men at the front ganged around the gun pits to see Battery F's first official shell pegged into the German lines, probably the last instance of concerted patriotism in the war.

The shell was tenderly kissed all around, somebody spit on it for luck, and when it was fired the case was seized and set aside for future presentation to the University of Illinois. Thereafter we pumped over a hundred shots, rapid fire, and the order came down to call it a day.

For fifteen minutes we sat around congratulating ourselves. In our exposed positions, we had gloomily imagined the first shot fired would bring a million tons of dynamite on our defenceless heads. Instead, the Germans cowered—silent, and doubtless scared to death. We began to feel sorry for such tame foes, when suddenly, rudely, there was a—s-s-s-s BONG!!!!

The first shell landed seventy-five feet in front of the battery. It was followed by another, and another, and another, each one a jump ahead of its little pals, and coming like kangaroos. Everybody flattened out in the gun pits and kept very quiet.

Between shells we peeked cautiously over the sandbags. Clouds of black smoke drifted from a dozen fresh craters, and the air was acrid with high explosive. Bang! Bang! Two shells wheeled in twenty feet ahead. The joke was over.

Lieutenant E—— was in charge of the battery. At the first shell he manifested signs of uneasiness. At the second he seemed to be having some trouble with the trees. But if he could have been entered in the Olympic games at the precise second the last two hit, he would have won a bosomful of medals and demolished all world's records.

He did the one-hundred yards from the battery to the echelon in nothing flat. Once, in midair, he made a megaphone of his hands and yelled to the men to take shelter. That was while he was taking the water jump.

After lobbing over fifteen or twenty shells the Heinies quit work, and it became apparent that they weren't shooting at us, anyway. They were after a narrow-gauge railroad one hundred yards to the left.

Lieutenant E——, considerably bushed, returned to the battery in time to censor all accounts of the matter in our letters home. He made out that if we wrote anything about it the Germans would find out where we were and raise hell.

It was dig, dig, dig for several days. Not so boring now that we had missed a few hot ones. From time to time we were visited by Colonel Reilly, and panic ensued as we rushed about looking for blouses and steel helmets. The colonel was a great guy, but a bit fussy on the subject of helmets, a peculiarity of his that wrought much discomfort but saved many lives.

We were similarly bothered by high French officers, who were fond of calling every other day to look at our new dugouts. A lot of Gloomy Gusses they were, too, shaking their heads sadly and indicating by pantomime and much "boom, boom, booming" that the first shell landing on top of the *abri* would kill everybody in it.

Telephones connecting the position with headquarters were installed and the telephone detail were promptly named Ruth, Fanny, and Pearl. It was particularly tough on one of them whose monicker hitherto had been Whisky.

The telephone system introduced more apple sauce. Elaborate codes were invented to fool the Germans, who were supposed to have every wire well tapped. Thus, "Can I borrow a chew of tobacco?" meant that Gun Number One was on the bum, and the obliging adjutant would usually attend to this disaster by sending over a chew of tobacco.

Likewise, Captain Joseph Patterson, a bright man in civil life, was given to calling up with, "One of my typewriters won't shoot," which fooled the German general staff for six months and materially hastened the end of the war.

As more days passed and nothing happened the doughboys began to get skittish. Some of the Alabama outfit sought to relieve their boredom by pitching hand grenades into the New York trenches—all in good, clean fun, of course.

Another way to get a kick was to crawl out in No Man's Land and then go "BOO!" at the sentries coming back. Alabama went in for that, too. Those babies couldn't get enough.

What stories were woven around their curly heads! As for example:

One of them lost his temper in a crap game—every dugout on the line was a miniature Monte Carlo—so he decided to get even. With ten francs he promoted a bottle of cognac and meditated darkly for a while. Then he rejoined the game and announced that it was over. The game, that is.

The Alabama boys were easy going, but they took their gambling seriously. Somebody told Bitter Bill to go outside and button his nose. He was firm and suggested a second time that the game be adjourned.

There were no soft answers in the war. A dozen gamblers told Bitter Bill where he could go and what he could do when he got there. He stood like a statue of Horatius and said he would give them one more chance. A movement to throw him out on his ear was started. He was notified.

"All right," said the immortal calmly. "Fade this!"

And he tossed a hand grenade into the middle of the pot. The dugout was wrecked. Twelve were killed, including himself.

The general staff wisely court-martialled his remains and dishonourably discharged his ghost. At least, that was how we heard it.

One day, early in March, it stopped raining and simultaneously it was rumoured that we were in for some war. The Germans were destroying the barbed wire along the Paris-Strasbourg railway, and the dope was that the uhlans would be popping through any minute to make marmalade of all the Americans they could find.

Machine guns were hurriedly set up along the roads, and we sat at our guns for three solid days and nights. Again no luck. It was reported that the German general learned whom he was up against and faked the measles.

More rumours. Some had it right from the feed box that we were going back to the States *toot sweet* to teach the Young Idea how to shoot. All of us to be commissioned, of course.

Whenever the war got good and tough later on, and we needed a belly laugh, this particular rumour was repainted and put back in circulation. The first time, however, it worked and made up for all our troubles. The mud, the work, the boredom were getting on our nerves.

The little Greek had gone woman crazy, and we were forced to drag him to the front to protect our rations, which he would trade recklessly at the drop of a skirt. Cooped up in the battery position he now began experimenting with food.

One day he loaded the stew with raw ginger. We promptly withdrew the fifty dollars a month bonus we had been chipping in over and above his salary (on the assumption that he *was* a cook), and he threatened to go on strike.

Whenever we had a minute to ourselves, the officers bethought themselves of the old field artillery recreation of hauling two thousand heavy shells, three at a time, nine hundred yards, simply to haul them back again the next day. That was intended to keep us out of mischief.

All of a sudden, toward the middle of March, things began to liven up. Half a dozen French Croix de Guerre regiments moved in. Some big guns were wheeled up, some of them twelve-inch rifles, and the word went out that we were going to knock the Germans loose from their underwear on J Day, H hour; which designated any day and hour our generals thought best.

Everything became tense and significant. There was one of those spy scares, with no stone or bush unturned. Ammunition piled up beside the guns. Our officers gum-shoed here and there, skittish as sorority girls, whispering and adding up long columns of figures.

A few minutes after midnight on the morning of March 20th, the alarm came down. We dove into our clothes and slopped down to the gun pits on the double. Five hours went by. Another false alarm.

At seven o'clock that night Lieutenant Stone pounced out of his dugout and gave us another: "Battery, attention!" A bit dramatically he announced that it was finally J Day and would be H hour in forty-five minutes.

In ten seconds we were all set. Shells were arranged in layers, fuses laid out at a safe distance from the high explosive, gas masks were adjusted, helmets nervously patted down so that more protection was afforded the right eye.

For a crowded half hour we patted the guns, fussed with the levels and aiming stakes, and guessed at bloody consequences.

Seven forty-five.

"Fire!" yelled Lieutenant Stone. Simultaneously the air was ripped by terrific explosions from cannon all around us. Our own guns sounded like cap pistols in a boiler factory. Everything was racket, riot, and confusion.

The officers ran up and down the pits shrieking futile orders above the thunder of the guns. The men yelled back without hearing what was said—it had nothing to do with the firing data, of course. Shells stuck in the bores and had to be delicately tapped out, expert and nerve-racking work, since that's how guns blow up.

The violent concussion knocked over the first piece aiming stake. Rush Dyer hopped out of the gun pit and held a pocket flash in its place, with our shells screaming past his ears. More and more guns began to open up, and every crack and cranny of sound was filled with the clatter of machine-gun and rifle fire.

After the first ten minutes of fire the battery worked like a charm, every man on the job, every man part of the gun. The officers, with less to do and more responsibility for what was going on, were more excited. They began screaming orders that had been executed from the start, and jumped in the pits to hold big powwows and get in everybody's way. Sample:

"Is there [*BANG!*] a shell [*BANG-BANG!*] in that gun?"—"Yes, sir!" (Blankety—*BANG!*)

"Well, put one in!" (*BANG!*)

Now, you know that's silly. And stuff like:

"For God's sake, Nahowski [*Crack! BANG!*], why don't you fire?"—"My aiming stake is out."—"Well, fire anyhow!" (*BOOM!*)—"Oh, get the hell out of here, will you—sir?"

Nearly an hour of this and our ranges were up 2,000 metres—sure proof that the doughboys had reached the enemy trenches and were sitting pretty—when the telephone rang and somebody came charging down to the gun pits with orders for a new barrage, to the right. Guns were relaid in a second and we dumped it over, wondering what the hell was up.

It's fascinating to work a 75 and guess at what's going on a couple of thousand yards ahead by the changes in deflection and range. Again the range went up, 100 metres at a time. Q. E. D., the Germans were on the run.

Worry began to centre on the guns, which were white-hot and getting hotter—promising any number of blow-ups and short cuts to heaven.

When the paint began to roll off the tubes Lieutenant Stone ordered everybody but gunners and Number One men from the pits. Worrisome, but the added work happily kept the mind off possibilities.

In the nick of time "Cease firing" came down. We swabbed out the guns with hard grease and cold water and went to bed in our new dugouts—for the first and last time.

Just before daylight the Germans counter attacked, and we had to peg another barrage; but we were veterans then. No sooner had we finished than, abruptly and for no good reason, we were ordered to pack and beat it back to Lunéville. The old rumour of rest camps, delousing, new uniforms, and seven-day leaves reared its pretty head, and we hiked back from the front whistling "Madelon" and "The Old Gray Mare."

The attack had been a great success—plenty of prisoners, *beaucoup* lines of trench.

Our box fire had slaughtered a division.

We were all together, safe and sound, and bound for a rest camp—in the pig's eye.

CHAPTER III

IT WAS a good war for a week. There we were, headed for a rest camp, just like the papers said. Maybe there was a Santy Claus. Maybe Pershing *was* on the square.

A day's hike landed us at Haudonville, a tank town in Lorraine—and hot on our heels came a courier with orders for service on another front. Smiling, the boys fell dead. They yelled their hearts out for an hour, and were soothed only by the feeling that we were such hellers in action that we couldn't possibly be spared.

Besides, there was plenty of diversion—elegant swimming and a chance to get deloused. During the afternoon a soccer game was arranged between the battery and some French who lived in a château near our haylofts.

The contest was held on the grounds of one François de Montmorency, Duc de Lumbourc, and ended in a riot after two Frogs got kicked in the head. They claimed it constituted cheating, and we razzed them for sissies, bringing up many things we had heard of French customs that were bitterly resented on their part. The game was called off when Scotty Langlands pulled one Frog's whiskers—an unpardonable insult in France. Final score: sixty to nothing, our favour.

Hoodlumsville was a beer town, but there weren't ten francs in the battery bank roll, so we had to fall back on simpler pleasures. Rush Dyer caught the Greek red-handed, presenting a lady of the town with a sack of flour. With a great show of virtue he hauled Mr. Papolis back to the battery and as nimbly returned to the lady's *maison* to cash in. As he approached, however, a large coloured man in the uniform of a French lieutenant emerged with loving backward looks.

Massa Dyer was from the State of Mississippi. In a flood of bitterness he cancelled all Franco-American relations, and even let on that we were fighting on the wrong side.

Those of the battery who Respected Womanhood and stood for the Better Things of Life had a grand time with Germaine and her mamma, a pleasant pair who served elegant omelettes in exchange for items of equipment, and urged us to behave ourselves. There was nothing else to do until we were paid, and that didn't happen until we were well on our way to the next front. (After the last grand rally the paymaster knew better.)

A driving rain overtook us on the march, and lasted through Easter Sunday, when we reached a point near

Baccarat called Pneumonia Hill, the longest and muddiest slope in France.

Happily, a French peddler was on hand with unlimited quantities of warm champagne, five francs the quart bottle; and a considerable portion of our pay changed hands.

Strengthened and refreshed, we wrestled with the horses, who wallowed bellies under in the sticky black mud—waist deep in spots. Somehow the caissons were pulled into a patch of pine woods, and we prepared to settle down.

A cold rain was still falling. Ten minutes after we pitched pup tents it became a downpour. In twenty minutes it was a flood. Everybody was drenched, cold, and miserable. We cheered ourselves by singing "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam" and inventing new words to describe our officers, who craftily had passed up some dry billets in the last town, hardly ten minutes away.

Lieutenant Webster, called "Alice" by the battery for no good reason, crawled out of his pup tent like a sea lion and told us to shut our yaps. In the protecting dark we told Alice everything that cold rain and hot champagne can engender, including his genealogy from Adam to Old Dog Tray. The lieutenant sloshed wildly about the dark woods trying to find Bobby Groves, whose voice and invention knew no bounds. He was still trying to find out who said it all when he left for the States some months later.

When it was possible to move without steam tugs, we proceeded to Reherrey, the site of further glory. At the moment it was the quietest sector on the front; yet our newest looie galloped up and down the column with hoarse whispers to put out cigarettes while we were still a good five miles away. It was a raw, wet night, the wind was in our faces, and we resorted to spraying our tormentor with tobacco juice at the approach of his horse's hoofs—profusely begging his pardon afterward. By dawn he looked like a gingerbread man.

Reherrey was a little red-roofed village, six kilometres from the trenches in the foothills of the Vosges. It was inhabited by French and American troops and a few nervy civilians who preferred occasional high explosive to the inconvenience of moving to safer parts. Whenever we hit the Germans a lick or the Germans took a whack at us, the entire village seemed to know all about it days in advance. Hayracks were formally loaded with women and children and shipped somewhere back of the lines until it was over. But not often. Except for the splatter of Chau-Chats and machine guns on a still night, the little front was as quiet as the Maine woods for weeks after our arrival.

We finally reached the conclusion that the German front in this particular sector was operated by one man—some old gentleman who had been incapacitated for service on an active front and was given the Reherrey branch to mind while the regular troops were gone. An estimate of his daily activities led to the conclusion that he was the busiest man in Europe —with the possible exception of Frenchy Somant, who was bossing everybody and everything in consequence of his appointment as battery commander's assistant. He was cabbaging all the Y. M. C. A. supplies, too.

However, this isn't getting the old man anywhere. His daily programme, as we figured it out, took in the following:

5 A. M. Blow first call. Run up and down the trenches and fire a few 77's.

5:15 A. M. Breakfast. Send up the captive balloons. Run down to the first line and fire a few machine guns. Take mandolin lessons.

5:30 A. M. Back to the hangar. Take the 1870 model Fokker out for a ride over the trenches. Send over propaganda balloons.

So on through the day. In the afternoon he had a little leisure and possibly slept. Dick Patton, on observation duty, claimed that he saw him rolling his croquet court, and he was often seen performing such husbandry as kicking cows home from pasture and spading up sugar beets.

But at night he didn't have a minute to himself. Up and down the trenches he tore, firing star shells here, a rocket or two there, and stopping just long enough to zip over a belt or two of machine-gun ammunition.

The flares were so far apart that we began to wonder how he got around, until one of the observers reported that he had a bicycle—which led to 8,000 variants of the old population joke.

Adolph (we called him Adolph) had one curse—and that was drink. There was no other explanation for all the German guns in the sector suddenly and mysteriously going off at three o'clock one morning; and we entertained ourselves for two days wondering what was going to happen to the old pollywog when the general found out what he had done.

A fat lot Adolph cared. Stewed as a goat, he sent up an observation balloon the next day—and let it go. Everybody in Reherrey took time out for target practice as it sailed by. Subsequent developments indicated that the field marshal fired the old gentleman, replacing him with the army.

Speculations concerning Adolph's life and fate served to pass away the time, but there was little comfort out of the one-man-German-army notion when we began looking over our positions. They were ready made and stood out like sore thumbs. They had been standing since 1914. It was obvious that the Germans knew them better than we did; equally obvious that the first time we tried any monkey business it was good-bye all and see you later. And since we intended to get fresh as soon as possible we were worried.

A hill of solid rock to the right of the position was selected for new positions, and work commenced with crowbar and dynamite. There is no doubt that, finished, they would have been as strong as Gibraltar; but building them was an endless, horrible job. Chicken-wire camouflage was stretched over the proposed position five feet from the ground, making it impossible to stand erect. All of us were hunchbacks after the first week's sapping.

Anything, though, was better than the death traps we were occupying *pro tem*. The "dug-outs" looked like four frail piano boxes on end, roofed with tin to make them bombproof. Every time we fired a gun fifty-seven rafters caved in. Each dugout was equipped with running water. Sometimes it ran down the walls —more often through the door. The place was full of rats addicted to creeping across faces or chewing up shoes while the city slept.

However and what the hell, if we had been allowed to fight the entire war at Reherrey there would be no gray hairs in the battery now. It was a jake front. In the morning we woke, shook off the rats, stuck our feet into a pair of wooden shoes, and took a look at the sky. If rain threatened, fires were built in the gun pits with bundles of T. N. T. craftily burgled from Indiana's position over the hill. Eight or ten eggs were broken in a very dirty mess kit. Behold! An omelette! One member of the gun crew "allayed" to the kitchen for bread and coffee, and in a few minutes we were punishing swell breakfasts, composed largely of our own private stock.

We never hiked the mile into Reherrey unless wheat cakes were on the morning menu.

Breakfast over, we grabbed an hour's beauty sleep before we were called out to the guns. The work of cleaning the pieces and fussing around the gun pits seldom took long, and the rest of the morning was spent in improving our minds with the best sellers of 1901—a present from one of the welfare organizations.

Punctually at ten o'clock an old gentleman, generally supposed to be Adolph (functioning as spy), dashed up to the position on a bicycle and delivered the Paris editions of the Chicago *Tribune* and London *Daily Mail,* together with *La Vie Parisienne* and other hotsy-totsies. Having digested the world's news and expressed our own conclusions we changed from wooden shoes to hobnails and ambled in for lunch. This was served at any hour between ten in the morning and two in the afternoon, according to the Greek temperament and the Supply Company's distribution of wood.

For several days we had no wood at all. Boxes and wooden doors gave out, and there is some law about cutting down trees in France. One day we were confronted with the prospect of a meal of raw meat unless something inflammable could be salvaged before dinner time. Mme Dabanot, owner of the building adjacent to the kitchen, put her foot down on a proposition to convert her furniture into firewood, and the entire village meanly mounted guard on front doors. In this extremity the Greek had a brilliant hunch.

The day before, in his explorations for firewood, he had wandered as far as the second-line trench and had spent some time examining barbed-wire entanglements. In our hour of need it occurred to him that the barbed wire was supported by stakes, that the stakes were of wood, and that wood burned easily. Q. E. D., Eureka, and what hath God wrought?

With great stealth and cunning the Greek gathered a party of hungry soldiers and marched them up to the second line. In fifteen shining minutes we hacked away more barbed-wire entanglements than a regiment of French engineers could replace in a month.

In the midst of this vandalism a French colonel appeared and screamed so loud that ten miles away they thought an armistice had been declared. Pale as death, he flung himself on the Greek. At first he merely called on God to witness what was happening and then led up to more personal issues. Among other things, he wanted to know if all Americans were nuts, did we want to get killed, or were we just inviting the Germans to come over and play?

The Greek replied volubly in his native tongue, with terrifying swings of his hatchet and many "pas compree." He secretly hated the French for what he considered to be a mercenary attitude on the part of their women and nearly chopped the colonel's head off in consequence.

"Coffee!" he screamed during his rare excursions into English. "The mens must have coffee! No fooling, boys! Make a little fast!"

The Frenchman exploded in a few final remarks and rushed for eighty-nine generals. We tore in the other direction with three days' firewood, and ate—for a change. The best hazards on the western links were wrecked, and what of it?

Despairing of ever firing at anything real, standing gun drill was introduced, and we whiled away the afternoons demolishing imaginary cavalry as they romped over the hill; or played baseball. These contests were plainly visible to observers in German balloons, but they were trying to learn the game, and we were not bothered.

In the evening all those not needed at the guns gathered in Reherrey at one of the two cafés. There was an abundant supply of *vin rouge* and *vin "blink"* at varying prices: three, five, and ten francs a copy, to be exact. The first grade was diluted vinegar, the second fair Pinard, and the third plain bottled hell. On getting fried the custom was to visit the Y. M. C. A. canteen, a secondhand stable operated by a human scantling with a bad temper. This bozo passed out paper and envelopes but never had both at the same time; what's more, he didn't want any remarks about the shortage. On discovering that he was nervous we razzed him nearly to death.

The thing that annoyed Baby most was a little song to the tune of "Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning." It ran, roughly, as follows:

The other day I met a man from the Y. M. C. A.
I said, "I'd like some choc-o-lates to-day."
He looked at me so sweetly, and sadly shook his head,
And handed me a paper (nine days old) and this is what he said:
Chorus:
Some day we're going to have some chocolate,
Some day we're going to have some butts.
But the hardest thing to get
Is a Camel cigarette.
We can't get 'em up, we can't get 'em up,
We can't get 'em up to the trenches.
Some day we'll have some writing paper.
Some day we'll have some cakes surfine.
But now we have no stuff at all,
*And if we did we'd eat it all.**
So get out, and stand in the endless line.

Not very good rhyming, maybe; but Mr. Secretary had an unusually low boiling point and went off his nut whenever it was sung—especially when sung sissie. After two weeks of sound teasing, he quit his job. His place was taken by a perfect gentleman who took the bull by the horns and paid a call at the battery position.

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*Varied with: The officers, they get it all.

He was, he assured us, already a veteran of the Great War by virtue of his discharge from the First Officers' Training Camp, then and there in his pocket. He couldn't have made a worse opening. None of us liked officers any too well, and R. O. T. C. spelled leprosy. We razzed him out with his predecessor, and arranged to make all purchases from the Y. M. C. A. through our battery office.

Occasionally we fired a barrage for the doughboys, who got so they loved us. We were dead shots. Each gun crew was good for thirty-two shells a minute, and every barrage was on its way before the signal rocket went out. Real Statler service.

The telephone detail ran into a peck of trouble at Reherrey, due to the Frog farmers, who ploughed up wires right and left, not caring a damn about the war except for occasional bombardments. Several times we had to clear their cows out of the way before we could shoot, and once some hefty Maud Mullers bunched in front of the guns and began to cut hay—misconducting themselves so conspicuously that we wrote another song about it. It will be mailed on receipt of a self-addressed, stamped envelope; only don't write.

Meanwhile work on the new position progressed, if that word will cover the hard, slow grind that went on all night and day. A narrow-gauge railway was built to haul the rock away and named the Battery Position & Northern, owing to general direction.

Between trips we found a strip of 30 per cent. grade, guaranteed to kill. It was our habit to pile into the baby box car and shoot down the incline a mile a minute. At a given point, the brakeman would yank out the shovel handle that served as brake, leer maniacally, and throw the heavy car and occupants thirty feet into a strip of chicken-wire camouflage. Nobody ever got hurt, beyond a broken leg or two.

New horse lines were established in a wood near Merviller, equidistant from Baccarat and the battery position. Lieutenant Dolly Smith and Sergeant Karl Geisendorfer, both swell guys, were in charge. It was a hell hole at first; rain, mud, and work—work, mud, and rain. Impossible to walk around in hip boots without losing one or both of them.

The horses had to be groomed a dozen times a day, owing to their rare horse sense in flopping in the mud every time a driver bent over to tie his shoe. Ammunition went to the front at all hours of the day and night. And we were cold, wet, and hungry all the time.

Dolly Smith kept us alive, somehow. He walked around as if it had been Paris, borrowing chews of tobacco, pausing to make a pass in a crap game, kidding some belly-aching driver, and scattering sunshine in general. When everything else failed he would tip off some gabby hero not to let it go any farther, but our missing barrack bags were at Brest, and we would be with them *toots sweet*. We were all going back as instructors. But not a word! Ten minutes later we were too busy spreading the news to howl.

With the approach of spring the sun began to go to work, and in two or three weeks our mud hole was a garden spot. The Y. M. C. A. sent up Jack Dana, another swell guy (really), and the band gave a concert once a week—chiefly as a means of getting "Sambre et Meuse" out of Sylvester's Francophile system.

We built stables which kept the horses clean and the stable orderlies fat, and settled down for the second one hundred years. There were nightly congregations in the stables, with rotating bartenders.

Carrie Nation, our trained single-mount, operated beautifully. When the grape juice ran out we stuffed the right number of francs in a pair of saddlebags, hit her a lick, and she ran three miles to a trusted saloonkeeper, who loaded her up and sent her back. Francs failing, the horses' rubbing alcohol was always available. It was quite palatable when diluted equally with water.

Or, if one tired of home life, there was Baccarat, with dinner for eight francs and champagne for the plutocratic few. At the camp there was extra duty next morning for the same. We even had milk with our oatmeal on this pearl among fronts. Ivy Van

Landingham playing milkman every morning with a necklace of canteens that had held grapejuice the night before.

Moreover, Colonel Reilly forgave Pappy Le Prohon for certain amorous adventures in Lunéville and again placed him in charge of the echelon. Immediately Pappy surrounded himself with innumerable dog robbers and sergeant majors and reminded the dilatory of an officer's privilege of shooting to kill. There was one more matter he wished to bring up—i. e., that the breweries of France were not operated for the consumption of the battery exclusively.

"Leave some of it for ME!" he bawled bitterly. And we knew that Pappy's reinstatement was complete. Just to make sure that we didn't completely drain the adjacent territory Pappy purchased four cases of excellent beverage on his own hook and barricaded himself behind them. While he slept Bud Boyles was busy with screwdriver and gunny sack—the most daring appropriation in the entire history of crime.

Pappy was one of those boys who would have shot at the drop of a pint. Probably the greatest moment of the war occurred when he reached for the sixth bottle out of a possible fifty—and found nothing left.

Immediately his lifelong contempt for the National Guard—engendered by twenty years in the regular army—disappeared, and, like the good sport he was, he announced that we were soldiers, by God, real soldiers ,with guts, and that the next time it happened we would fry in hell, if he had to shoot everybody in the battery. He had too much honour to go noseying around after the culprits. Not like some other lieutenants we could mention.

Pappy was busier than Foch. He was in every part of camp at the same time, using his game leg (full of Moro bullets) like a pogo stick. His guard mounts were notorious all over the sector for their conformity to regulations. Second looies trembled at his approach.

Above all things Pappy loved his horse, a black Blitzen named Prince, possessed of the devil and his angels. One day he was polishing Prince off, brushing his teeth and putting a little shoe dubbing on his hoofs, when along came a second lieutenant just assigned to the regiment.

The day was hot, and Pappy had removed his coat and with it all insignia of rank. The lieutenant was aching for trouble.

"Hey You!" he said (Hey You being the nickname given all soldiers by officers). "What's the matter with you? Is your right arm paralyzed or something? Or don't you recognize an officer when you see one?"

Pappy looked up from Prince's toilette to see what private was catching hell now. That was one thing about Pappy. He wanted to do all the hell raising himself. But when he saw the looie's finger pointing his way, he turned slowly blue. The lieutenant mistook his emotion for fright, and continued:

"Well, you big barrel head, why don't you salute?"

Pappy found his voice. At first it was a wild, unearthly howl, like that of a wounded lion. Gradually words could be distinguished—and what words!

He began with the very short ones, and worked up to bright blue epithets that were dazzling in their invention and application. The lieutenant began to cry. Pappy paused in his profane spirals and made the unhappy shavetail salute 150 times without stopping.

Days came and went. Top Sergeant Danny Elwell had a dispute with Lieutenant Stone touching on whether he (Elwell) or Lieutenant Stone was battery commander. On this point Lieutenant Stone decided in his own favour, reducing Elwell to the horse lines with orders to keep his trap shut. Karl Geisendorfer became first sergeant—and turned out to be a pip.

A few officers were returned to the States as instructors. Lieutenant Webster was announced to go, in which matter the battery felt it got its first break. About a week later we lost Lieutenant Dolly Smith—and that was pretty tough.

Dolly packed reluctantly, hanging around like Sister Ann for some courier to dash up and say it was all a horrible mistake. Instead the order was confirmed. Dolly shook hands all around and climbed into the supply wagon, homeward bound. As he passed band headquarters, the boys came out and played "Some of These Days." There were tears.

"Pinard" Parks assumed charge of the horse lines. Simultaneously he got boiled as an owl in Baccarat, socked an M. P., and was fined half his lieutenant's pay—an event which earned our undivided respect.

Two or three contemporary scandals:

Private Finke refused to give Lieutenant Bradford, then officiating as officer of the day, his mail, on the grounds that he (Finke) was eating and couldn't be disturbed. Our lieutenants fell to quarrelling and were straightened out by Major Redden.

An uplifter employed by the Y. M. C. A. got up and said he had joined the army to escape the draft, and that secretly we were anxious to go home. Major Redden hauled him outside before any of the boys could get him, and broke his skull. Porch Climber took a bath. Bob Groves and Art Barker had fisticuffs.

Just for the hell of it, one of the batteries shot up a German post of command. This was decidedly against the rules, and the Germans were furious. In a fit of temper they blew up one of our billets. We came back by destroying two mess halls and a kitchen. One thing led to another, and before long a merry war was on. It was no longer safe for the Germans to hold basket picnics nor for us to play baseball.

All this bad feeling culminated in another J Day, H Hour early in May. We worked up to the attack.

with three days' preliminary fire directed at the German wire. On the third day we laid a box barrage around a couple of regiments in the Bois des Chiens that was a honey. When the doughboys went over, several hundred Germans were in pieces, which greatly increased our growing prestige with Ohio and New York. Of course, the firing was done from the new positions. The old ones went to the bow-wows in the first ten minutes of play.

It had been an awful job moving the shells from the old homestead, and during the attack we were so tired that the cannoneers—those who weren't needed—crawled under the gun tubes and slept through it all. They woke up at each report until they were stone deaf, when they were able to get in a good four hours without interruption. Deafness was a blessing in the field artillery. It came in ten minutes' fire and lasted a week—excepting in a few cases, when it was permanent.

Despite the violence of our attack there was no reprisal to speak of; and we swung again into the old happy routine.

Summer was beginning. The fruit trees that speckled the little town began to bloom, lilacs and cornflowers and poppies appeared, and a series of perfect days. Even the little Greek became amiable and made long pilgrimages over the country for strange weeds and hard-boiled eggs wherewith to deck the rations. On one of these occasions he encountered a mysterious fellow countryman, who lived and grew fat in our kitchen all because he could spick "Grick."

The machine gunners established themselves in a shady grove near the guns and made life a hell for all the crows and innocent bystanders in the vicinity. Harry Hopper made a laboratory out of an abandoned trench and exploded all the shrapnel and high explosive he could steal, to the infinite distress of law-abiding people who didn't want to go to the hospital that way.

Now and then we subscribed for a barrel of beer and installed it on the grass beside the kitchen. At first the French were asked over and invited to join in the ensuing close harmony. Our brave allies' repertoire consisted of "Madelon," the Marseillaise, and a drinking song, at the end of which wine bags were drained at a swallow.

We specialized in various blues, which the Frogs admired because of their deep sentiments—explained in sign language. Here, too, we began the Boola-Boola Club, with Goofy Pierre as charter member. The sign of the order was made by placing the thumb to the temples and extending the fingers, which seems to mean something peculiarly disagreeable in France.

When the Frogs displayed reluctance to make the sign we began kidding them a bit, interpolating disparaging and highly personal rhymes in our songs.

Two or three words were a little too current to be misunderstood, and the Boola-Boola Club ended in a fist fight, as all our international societies seemed to do.

Toward the close of May the Germans began to get huffy. There was an artillery attack at some part of the line every night. They gave us everything they had, even projectors of mustard gas. Sensing a general attack, we dug like a house afire by day and carried thousands of shells by night.

Early on the morning of June 6th it came. Viewed in the light of later events it was a brisk little skirmish. Then it was comparable with Verdun. The Heinies started in with a nasty gas attack at one-thirty in the morning, slamming over a mean barrage a minute later.

A new battery executive was at the guns. As the klaxons sounded up and down the line he became a little skittish. So did we.

Fortunately for our nerves a barrage was ordered, and we began socking them across from every gun. Then, when we weren't even looking—*Bam!!!!*—right on the nose, not fifty feet from the first gun. That first shell was bad news, but the second was worse. It landed one hundred feet behind the second gun, establishing a perfect bracket. We could but expect a fire-at-will and harps and wings forevermore.

Our new executive did not wait for the general ascension. Down in the telephone sap he went, eight stairs at a time. Half the masonry followed from pure suction.

"The 'phone" he yelled. "Get Lieutenant Stone—for God's sake!"

Need it be added that we were serving the guns rather nonchalantly? Lieutenant Stone, asleep in Reherrey, was reached.

"Howard!" screamed the battery executive. "Oh, Howard—my God!"

"What the hell's the matter with you?" asked Lieutenant Stone, naturally enough. Our executive cried that we were getting murdered, that was all; that the position was drenched with shells; that we were being blown to bits, and added: "What'll I do—what'll I do?"

Lieutenant Stone told him—rather tersely—and hopped over to the battery on the double. Meanwhile the Indiana heavies had silenced our little friends and nothing further disturbed our fire. There were some close shaves, and parts of the camouflage and sandbags were torn to pieces. It was our first experience serving the guns under actual fire, and worth a million dollars.

Another spell of peace and quiet. Three or four souvenir hunters picked up some strange green shell fragments that had dropped in during the battle, and there was an immediate epidemic of itch in the battery. Mustard gas. The collectors were shot to the base hospital at Vittel, and several members of the battery attended sick call for a month.

A German airplane was shot down directly over the kitchen, bursting into flames as it fell. We could see the pilot distinctly. He tried gamely to control the machine and wrap a scarf around his face at the same time. His hands were still frozen to the stick when he crashed.

Later in the war they were dropping like flies; but nothing ever equalled the thrill this poor devil provided. Mess was abandoned—see us doing that later on, for anything—and there was a rush for souvenirs. The Frogs guarding the burning plane were shoved aside, and everything but the engine was plucked from the flames.

The Dutchman was buried in style, with a cross and benefit of clergy.

Members of the Shipping Board and a couple of Congressmen came to see us. We were introduced by the colonel as the battery "having the least discipline and firing the most shells." We did a lot of show shooting. It was getting to be routine now. There was a wedding in town between bombardments. The couple, as far as anyone can learn, settled down and lived happily ever after.

Early in June rumours of a more active front were frequent. Again we were destined for the Marne, the Aisne, the States, Italy, Kokomo, and Paris. Toward the middle of June the rumours were more circumstantial. One day elements of the 77th Division began moving in. We packed.

Lieutenant Stone made us throw away our wooden shoes and other backwoodsman paraphernalia. Ammunition was sorted all over again. We got the heebie-jeebies and felt that it would be our luck to get killed in a quiet sector, with Château-Thierry going on. Then, at midnight, June 19th, in the nick of time, word came down.

All night long we marched in a driving rain, past the doughboys of the 77th. The 165th (New York's old 69th) had a swell time recognizing old friends *en passant.*

At noon the next day, after achieving almost fifty kilometres in twelve hours under full pack, we reached Dames aux Bois, and entrained—as we thought—for Château-Thierry. By a lucky break we were diverted at Châlons in time to mix up in the greatest battle of the world, Bastille Day in the Champagne.

CHAPTER IV

When Sherman said war was hell he stuttered. Besides, he was marching through Georgia at the time, and everybody knows that Southerners are horribly hospitable; whereas we were being tossed from one front to another like a medicine ball.

On entraining for the Champagne the officers made out that we were going to Château-Thierry, where the Marines were doing their stuff. The news was a little depressing. We were not on the best terms with the Marines at the moment. For one thing, the M. P. section of that otherwise admirable unit had rather soured us by the zeal with which they played copper. And then the Fighting Few seemed to be grabbing all the credit for the war.

The Marines shared our dislike cordially. We never passed them on the road without some leatherneck bawling out: "What comes out after a storm?" and hearing two thousand Marines yell back: "The Rainbow!"

Our instant reply was: "Go home and tell your mother you seen the soldiers!" and there were quite a few black eyes between us.

"What's the biggest colour in the Rainbow?" was another of their wisecracks, the answer being: "YELLOW!"

We had a reply for this childish libel that surpassed any sample of repartee invented in the war—lingo difficult to reproduce, except on asbestos. Suffice it to say that the Marines *had* to be first to Fight whenever it was applied.

We respected their courage yet were a little worried over the possibility of being brigaded with them in action. It is weakening to lick Marines and Germans at the same time; so when the train stopped at Châlons-sur-Marne and no Marines were about, we were grateful for the opportunity to concentrate on the enemy.

This change in plans worked some disadvantage. For instance, we had calculated on a four-day trip, whereas we were bundled out in two. Some of the boys rode on flat cars to guard the guns, which meant exposure to cold rain and the necessity of preventing pneumonia with frequent libations of rum. With four days' leeway it was possible to get sober and debark decently under individual power. But with forty-eight hours lopped out of the journey . . .

The writer has no wish to obtrude his personality into this narrative of his fellows. But it might just as well go into the minutes that nobody (since Noah) was so completely lit as when the flat car serving as his catafalque came to be unloaded. Ramps and a pair of mules were needed to get him off and into the line of march, with serious consequences, as follows:

In the first place, the French High Command had experienced considerable misgivings over our participation in this most crucial battle of the war. Not that they doubted our spirit; our heroism was the talk of Europe. But the situation called for most experienced troops and most desperate courage. If the Champagne was lost, so was Paris—and perhaps the war.

So they stood with Colonel Reilly and watched us swing by. Eyes—left! Forward—march! Hep, hep, hep. We were sweet to see. Uniforms tidy, faces washed, shoes shined—hot stuff in every way. The worried Frogs perked up. We looked like the Old Pepper.

Then—at the very end of the procession—appeared an unfortunate, strapped to one of the guns and singing loudly. The parade was stopped. The singer was untied and propped up before several gold-plated generals, including the hardest, coldest, and most disciplinarian colonel in the American army.

Colonel Reilly pointed his finger like a twelve-inch railroad gun and asked what in the so-and-so-and-so-and-so was this so-and-so-and-so doing in the world, let alone in an army. Lieutenant Stone, who had galloped up to shoot the writer, blanched. The

French generals ordered a halt in the war while they talked things over.

Resuming, the colonel asked the unhappy man if he had no pride in his country, which moved the private to weep and declare his patriotism in such ardent terms that the French General Staff nearly wept themselves. Encouraged, the private offered to die on the spot to show his loyalty, and nearly got kissed by a big Frog. In the end Colonel Reilly himself buttoned the writer's blouse and adjusted his helmet—and smiled, and his Irish pan seemed like an angel's to one man, at least. The war was declared on.

To Chepy, a little chalk town on the Marne canal, where we rested four days (if constant drills, pinking up the guns, and standing inspection can be called rest). There was swimming in the canal, some baseball and fairly decent haymows, where we got lousy all over again. A dairy where we bought cheese, eggs, and milk. The army was still serving Ford tires and goldfish. In fact, the food was so bad that the colonel ordered an inspection, and we were tipped off by a lieutenant to say it was elegant. One anarchist had the guts to show the inspecting officer his mess kit full of dehydrated onions, stewed sawdust, etc., and got socked for extra duty.

Late on the fourth day we started for the front. Boots, boots, boots all night long, and like it! Ever since Lorraine it had been a crime against God to ride on the carriages, or to dump packs in supply wagons. At daybreak we arrived at the Camp de Carrière, a collection of wooden barracks pancaked over a chalk plain. We squatted among the scrubby pine trees and lay low. A few German airplanes were about. It was too hot to talk or even shoot craps. We wondered how Cæsar stuck it out on the same plain nearly two thousand years ago.

June 30th came along and marked the first anniversary of our service for home, country, and democracy. To celebrate there was a band concert when the sun went down. Colonel Reilly and Major Redden spoke.

The major was an ex-football star with a Number 99 heart. He's dead now, may God rest his gallant soul! He talked of the emotional side of the war, what we owed to France, and threw a kiss to the lovely ladies we had left behind. (The major was a Crusader, astray from his proper century.)

Then Reilly spoke. He folded his hands in front of him and filed away at our spines in his best West Point voice. He could have got Pittsburgh that day, and he wasn't even trying.

The colonel's celebrated father died on the Wall of China; and Reilly Junior seemed bent on topping his fate then and there.

"Ideals," he said, "are splendid, and it is pleasant to share Major Redden's views on the chivalrous aspect of war. But you have seen your dead and are now soldiers.

"You are going into a battle in which many of you will be wounded. That is unfortunate, but it doesn't matter in the least. Some of you will be killed. That makes no difference. You are cogs in a wheel. The only important thing is that you function —that you do exactly what you are told during the battle, instantly and without question."

Unsentimental, but somehow thrilling.

The front line was a few kilometres ahead of the camp. There were a dozen false starts before we crept up during the night of July 4th and took position. Lieutenant Stone decided on a saucer-shaped hollow a hundred yards in advance of a little chalk road. We worked like trapped rats, getting the camouflage up before dawn.

The hot sun rose on endless miles of flat gray prairie wrinkled with white chalk trench. Here and there stood an optimistic tree or patch of pine. At the left the dim outline of Reims Cathedral. Over all an interminable sticky silence.

A glaring white trench in front of the position. Here we slept—or tried to sleep. All work was done in the hot night. When the sun began to beat down on that white chalk we could almost smell our burning flesh. So we sat and sweated and cursed the damned fools who sent us there until all known words wore out.

Now and then a distant boom, and high over our heads a load of dynamite whispered along, soft as the rustle of a dress. A faint and peaceful boom as it fell miles behind the lines.

We prayed for a breeze, but the heat closed in, still and terrible. Water was worth a million francs a canteenful, and there was no water. Only hot dribbles smuggled up during the night. Centuries ago the grass had withered and dried, and from out of the gray remains a few poppies blazed. Otherwise, dreary, desert waste, humming with a ceaseless and invisible activity.

That was by day.

With the first signs of dusk the armies came trooping over the rearward crest. Miles and miles of men, walking in single file; machine guns and minnewerfers silhouetted against the red sky like the spars of a shipyard. Doughboys, doughboys, doughboys, French, American, and Pole, marched into the wilderness, and the earth swallowed them up.

By morning it was the same waste land—empty, silent as the grave.

So many thousands upon thousands swarmed under the earth, so many thousands kept coming in, that the impending battle seemed like the end of the world. A good time to dig—and dig deep. We wore out fifty picks and shovels the first three nights and so arranged our gun pits that it would take a direct hit to kill. Every cubic inch of chalk went into a sandbag and was piled around the guns. Not a man stuck his nose from under the camouflage except at night, when there were big official powwows in the second section gun pit. The officers discussed the battle and our probable part. Armour-piercing shells were passed out for use against the tanks. An officer in one of the other batteries went off his nut from continued tension and prophesied the Germans would mow through as they had on the Somme; that we would all be killed. The men liked him and kept his remarks from reaching the colonel.

We were rehearsed in point-blank fire and destruction of the guns in the event of capture. Machine guns were mounted to the right and left of the battery to cover possible retreat.

Still the silence, and furnace heat. The air quivered with it. A hot wind whirled tons of chalk dust into our eyes and lungs. The men were white as millers. The tension became unbearable.

July 10th. Suddenly, the air swarmed with planes. Concealment was abandoned on both sides. From our forward observation posts we watched innumerable field-gray caissons of the enemy roll up to the front lines and empty their loads of shell. Openly, countless German engineers arrived with iron ramps with which to bridge the trenches. Field guns wheeled up and were placed.

On our side of the lines thousands of Chasseurs appeared from the rear in broad daylight and sank into the earth, already bloated with men. Battery after battery of 75's lined up beside us on the plain.

Had they been placed in straight lines the field guns alone would have stood hub to hub, two deep, across the entire front—the heaviest artillery concentration in the history of the world. Still not a shot.

July 11th, General Gourard addressed the following order to the French Fourth Army, of which the Rainbow Division was a part. The order was read at sunset by a little French lieutenant, his uniform shining blue in the clear dusk, his voice shrill with excitement:

> Soldiers of the Fourth Army!
>
> You will be attacked at any moment.
>
> All of you must feel that a battle was never fought before under more favourable conditions.
>
> You are warned. You are on your guard. You will fight on ground you have transformed by your hard work into a mighty fortress.
>
> You will be invincible if the passages are guarded.
>
> The bombardment will be terrible—but you will withstand it without weakening. The assault will be made in clouds of smoke, dust, and gas. It will be terrific, but your position and your arms are formidable.
>
> In your breasts beat the brave, strong hearts of free men.
>
> No one will look back.
>
> No one will yield an inch.
>
> Each of you will have but one thought—to kill, and to kill, and to kill!
>
> Your general says you will break this assault—and gloriously!
>
> It will be a great day for France!
>
> GOURAUD.

At the bottom of this prose poem were the words: "Approved: Major General So-and-so; Ordered to be read to troops: Colonel So-and-so, Chief of Staff." But even these idiotic evidences of red tape did not diminish the effect on the spine.

Still the silence. On the 12th, planes became more numerous, more active. At sunrise and at sunset the sky was black with them. More and more ammunition came up. We dug a little deeper, banked a little higher.

The 14th was Bastille Day. Barrels of Pinard were openly rolled up to the first line. The whisper ran around the plain that if the Germans held their fire any longer the French would attack first in celebration of their national holiday.

We turned in that night, certain that something would happen. Sure enough, at ten o'clock a hot barrage drummed on the left. It ended as suddenly as it began. A gallant handful of French volunteers had made a quick raid for prisoners. They caught a few shock troops entering the German front lines and dragged them back. Gouraud learned the hour of attack.

Just to be sure, he shot a few of the boys over on the right, under another swift barrage. Their prisoners corroborated the news. The German attack was to commence at midnight. Fifty miles back the Kaiser was sitting in a watch tower with a bucket of Iron Crosses and a nickel's worth of cut plug.

Gouraud was one of those boys who thought on his feet. He immediately withdrew all of his troops from the impregnable first-line trench. Next the dugouts, sixty feet underground, were filled with mustard gas. A few immortal volunteers—all dead now—were left in the trench with orders to send up caterpillar rockets on the arrival of the Germans. Half the field pieces, our own included, were then trained on our own abandoned first line.

Fifteen minutes to twelve.

The men were awakened and told the attack had come. Blankets were rolled. We scrambled into gas coats and masks, and the crews were beside the guns at the second of twelve. At that second the silent night was ripped apart by a sheet of flame forty miles long as thousands of cannon now trained on the front line cut loose.

The crash of sound that followed is comparable to nothing on earth. The world bucked like a mule. After the first deafening roar the guns hit a crescendo that went up, up, up and never seemed to cease. A deeper, rolling roar as the Germans started in. Bright flashes ahead and to the right as shells smashed around the positions; dense gray and black clouds in the red light. We yelled at the top of our lungs and pointed out new bursts. Voices vanished in the cataclysm of sound. The dog Topsy and her pups tore around the gun pits in a frenzy, trying to add their yips to the tumult.

Number One men braced against the guns, waiting for the signal to fire. Officers strained their eyes against the blazing front, waiting for the caterpillar rockets announcing the arrival of the enemy and the death of the volunteers. Rockets of every colour and description streamed across the sky, but never the right one. Overhead the rush of shell; behind, around, in front, a mighty sheet of flame. In the fluttering glare clouds of smoke pushed up as the shells wheeled in. The whistle of fragments around the position.

We were too spellbound to duck. Cannoneers hovered near the pieces and nervously rolled cigarettes. Why the hell didn't we fire? Gunners looked at their sight bubbles for the thousandth time. Number Two men fondled the shells.

Up went a rocket dump, thousands of blues and greens and red popping in the cluster.

"Whoopee!" yelled Johnnie Stovich. "That's got 'em." He attempted a slight Czecho-Slovakian hornpipe. The entire sky dripped with pretty colour.

An indistinct crash and shower of sparks two feet from the second gun. A couple of sandbags were knocked away. We thanked our God we had dug deep. The big shells were coming closer now. They were hardly noticed in the excitement. Now and then the curious, penetrating ping of gas, and coats were drawn a little tighter. The wind was in our favour, and the fumes were carried forward.

White-hot incendiary shells sailed over our heads like comets and landed in a pine woods. Immediately the entire plain lighted up in a wild shade of cerise.

An extra big shell found an ammunition dump. There was a volcano of smoke and flame, and the pink sky burst into ten thousand white blooms. A feeble rattle of shrapnel came through the uproar.

At the first ray of dawn the Germans came over. The caterpillar rockets finally burst in squirming beads of pearl. Down came Lieutenant Stone's arm. We were at last pumping them over, cursing the easy cadence. Range, 1,700 metres.

The noise following the last rocket burst was unbelievable. Anyone not present in the Champagne on the morning of July 15, 1918, may be able to imagine a minimum of the inferno by riding the bumpers of a freight train going a million miles an hour over a wobbly trestle. Words are no good, certainly.

Hundreds of German planes boiled up from nowhere and dived up and down the trenches, raking the doughboys with machine-gun fire. The French—hopelessly outnumbered—swarmed out to meet them and were shot down in flames.

One bright German dived on the battery position and emptied his belts into the camouflage. Rush Dyer and crew sicked our machine guns, "Min" and "Andy Gump," on him, and he ran like a whitehead.

Topsy and her pups got in front of the fourth gun, and the crew had to cease fire while Tucker brought them back. It involved dodging a great many of our own and enemy shells. With magnificent disdain for certain death, a Frog battery galloped across the field Crimean style, and planked their guns a hundred yards to the right. No camouflage. No gun pits. Nothing but guts and profound hope of the hereafter.

Their guns were trained. The firing officer stood beside them with a field glass. We pinched ourselves. Were these the Gussies that dived in the Lunéville abris whenever a shell fell a mile away? Well, that's a Frog for you. Put them on a safe front and they want to live forever. Sing the Marseillaise and they'll jump into hell fire yelling, *"La Gloire!"*

Three minutes after they were in position the Frogs were pegging them over. The surrounding noise made their fire sound like popcorn, but they were raising hell all right. Their officer was firing point-blank at moving targets.

All of a sudden—*Whooooosh!* and Vesuvius had opened under their feet. A mass of black and gray-brown smoke mushroomed up from where we saw them last, as a flock of six-inch shells dumped in. One of the prettiest sights of the war followed. A streak of fire shot through the dark cloud. The first gun was still firing. Another flash. The third was still there. For five minutes intermittent bursts. Then a single brave flash, twice.

The cloud drifted away, leaving a clutter of gun tubes and broken wheels. Two or three survivors writhed on the ground, holding in their guts.

Over on the left, black clouds arose from Reims Cathedral, on fire. In front, a boiling bank of dirty smoke, hiding the flower of the Prussian Guard. In back, the ammunition trains racing across the fields at a dead gallop, the drivers beating their horses with steel helmets. Shells landed right in their way as they performed a brilliant right into line. More shells. A left turn back to the road, with everybody in the field cheering the corporal in charge. Ten times he outguessed the German gunners and missed death by an eyelash. They were from the 117th Ammunition Train, an expert bunch.

Our own teams galloped up, with shells dropping between the carriages. With the added thrill of knowing all the drivers our helmets bounced off the camouflage every time they appeared out of the smoke—every man bent flat in the saddle, every man glued to his horse.

Three German sausage balloons were set on fire within five minutes, filling the dusky sky with smoke and flames. Six tiny observers danced down on parachutes—an aërial Punch and Judy show. One was caught in a falling balloon and burned alive. A battery of heavies which had displaced our kitchen was smothered with shell fire. A Number One man had his face burned off while he was swabbing out the gun. Somebody yanked the lanyard too soon. A shell landed in one of the gun pits and wounded Lieutenant Wegner.

A detail of heroes ran the gauntlet and brought coffee at nine o'clock. The guns were so hot now that they had to be swabbed after every shot. The cadence increased. Germans were getting through.

A shell hit the post of command and buried Lieutenant Stone, who was trying to sneak over a shave. It blew his shaving materials into Russia, where they weren't needed. Otherwise, no damage.

Meanwhile the drivers were chasing more ammunition. They reached one dump just in time to see it blow up. The same thing happened at the second, third and fourth dumps. It got to be silly. Finally they got a load back to the guns early in the afternoon.

What with this and what with that they had been having a hot time at the horse lines. Before the battle started the drivers had been screaming their hearts out because Colonel Reilly had chucked them in an acre of scrub pine, whereas Indiana basked in comfortable barracks five hundred metres away.

They were still pretty sore when the battle started and Indiana's barracks suddenly arose and began turning over and over. The air was filled with horses and men. Of course, the survivors bolted for our woods. Our drivers hinted that they'd better move on. Nobody knew where the next consignment of T. N. T. was going to land, and we wanted a fast track. Also a great love for Colonel Reilly suddenly was born in the bosom of every man present.

The rest of Indiana's horses broke loose and ran all around the battery, getting killed and putting us on edge with their screams. Sam Wallace and Bob Beuhler shot the daylights out of a German plane.

Meanwhile the battle hung in the balance. An interpreter dodged past the position on the run. We buttonholed him, fed him corn willie, and shook him down for information.

We were especially interested in news of Alabama. For a week the French had been fuming at the presence of our prize battlers in the lines. The boys had been champing at the bit and pulling the poilus' whiskers to pass the time away. One night they stole some of our ammunition boxes and erected a signboard along the front which ran, subject to some expurgation, as follows:

"Germans, Give Your Heart and Soul to Jesus, Because Your Neck Belongs to Alabam."

They further diverted themselves by scraping the warm red paint from the ammunition boxes and fixing themselves up to look like red Indians. In the staggering heat they stripped to the waist and painted terrifying designs on their arms, faces, and chests, applying what was left to noses of indignant and protesting Frogs. The latter were all for taking the war seriously and demanded that Alabama quit clowning or get out of the sector. They had some feeling that such maniacs would do more harm than good.

So we were delighted when the interpreter told how our favourite hoodlums had mixed with the Prussian Guard. At the moment of collision Alabam boiled over the trenches like all the fiends in hell and began throwing the Germans up for grabs. They worked with knives and hand grenades exclusively. (One squad polished off twenty-six of the Guard without firing a shot.) When they ran out of hand grenades they threw their helmets and cans of corn willie, whooping like wild Indians all through the day. Their losses in killed and wounded were shocking, but not a German lived within reach of their steel.

"They are eensane—those men," the interpreter complained. "They do not know the meaning of death. But what fighters!"

So with New York, Ohio, and Iowa. At the key point of the river Suippe we were eating them alive. Every hour or two our doughboys had to clear away the dead that were piled in front of the machine-gun emplacements. The front line abris, filled with mustard gas, were choked with the Germans who had sought refuge from the murderous fire of our own guns. It was a holy clean up.

These optimistic tidings were slightly offset by the spectacle of five or six hundred men in blue doing a marathon toward the rear. Since they wore the mortar-board *képis* of the Foreign Legion, notoriously a gang of fighting fools, it was quite disturbing. We tripped up a couple as they whizzed by and asked them where they thought they were going.

"Chicago!" they replied, and kept on running.

A few paused at the position for their second wind and went into the matter at greater length. They were not the Foreign Legion, as we had supposed; but the Polish Legion, recruited a few months before from the Stockyards of Chicago. Ten minutes after hitting the front line they discovered that it was all a terrible mistake and were doing their best to forget it. We gave them some letters to mail, and the marathon continued.

As they were passing the horse line, Pappy Le Prohon lassoed one of them and, also misled by the blue uniform, demanded news of the battle in excited French. The Pole looked at Pappy's silver shoulder bars and gave him a big push. Evidently he was disgusted.

"Where do you get this French chatter?" he asked. "Isn't your own language good enough for you? And you a lieutenant! Shame on you! Talk English if you got anything to say!"

Pappy's eyes bulged. His under lip became a blue toy balloon. He socked the Polack in the jaw and threw him in the first ration cart going to the front line.

Noon. We were abruptly ordered to cease fire. Gradually the bubbling roar slowed down. The German attack was broken.

Early in the afternoon they re-formed. The guns roared back for five hours. Soon they got sick of it and quit. The firing dwindled again into the haphazard pot shots of any active sector.

We shed our gas clothes and undershirts and flopped in the chalk to sleep—sun or no sun, shells or no shells. We were dirty as pigs, tired to death, and very happy. Colonel Reilly sent his compliments for our day's work. The Intelligence reported an overwhelming victory with thousands of German dead.

During the night we kept a harassing fire on the enemy lines. We were shelled heavily, and again saved by the strength of our positions. Another German plane dived at the guns, firing at the flashes. Steel helmets shed a few bullets.

Futile German attacks the next morning. More firing and rumours of a counter attack. Gas and those suffocating masks. Then a drenching rain. After nearly two weeks without sleep or much food the rain was a bad poke in the morale; particularly as our blankets and protecting pup tents were rolled in anticipation of a move. The men flopped in their slickers and slept, the rain beating in their faces.

On July 18th it was announced that the French and Americans had struck from Soissons to Reims and were going through. Early reports were that the salient was cut and that one million Germans were prisoners. Moreover, that the attack was made possible by our defence of the Champagne.

Immediately our morale jumped to one thousand. We felt that the Allies would never stop going now and that the war was about over. When it was announced that we were leaving for Château-Thierry to help shag, our feelings ran away with us.

When the moon rose that night we pulled out, covered with chalk and glory. The French turned out to cheer and say good-bye. The rendezvous was five kilometres from the guns. We made it on the double, for superstitious reasons. After five days of death by an eyelash we weren't going to get knocked off on any country roads.

We talked it over on the run. In three days we had fired five thousand rounds into infantry advancing in mass formation. In our little department eight waves of shock troops with do-or-die orders had been repulsed without setting foot in the first-line trench. We knew then that the 42nd Division could spot the German army five lines of trench and lick them, hands down. We admitted it while rolling Bull Durham cigarettes in the rain and lighting them with French sulphur matches. The blue sulphur flame asphyxiated, but it was better than getting shot for showing a light on the march. Thereafter we smoked them in the palms of our hands, crushing the coal like Spartans at the approach of an officer.

We shook a few bones and bottles and slept in the woods with the other logs. The next night we moved on to Vitry-la-Ville, our entraining point. Some of the drivers went to Châlons for horses and reported that the town had been nearly destroyed by shells and incendiary bombs. Thousands of women and children were sleeping in the fields and along the roads. Nearly a thousand German prisoners huddled at the city gates, laughing and crying—all shell-shocked.

The little Greek installed his kitchen in a lady's front yard and at once began making passes. He was again caught presenting a round steak with a meaning wink. Somebody crowned him in time.

Lieutenant Stone was promoted to captain, a just and welcome reward for our work of the past few days. Seeking to celebrate, he passed out quantities of minerva bis-kweet, tasty but greasy as hell. There was an epidemic of bellyache, and we wished he had been reduced to the ranks instead.

In the early dawn of July 22nd we entrained for Château-Thierry. Under the handicap of a driving rain we loaded in forty-five minutes—a regimental record. Every town through which we passed was hung with American flags. Women and children cheered and threw kisses, and we hit the next line in a swell frame of mind.

CHAPTER V

THE Germans were still running when we got to Château-Thierry. From the looks of things it might have been Hallowe'en. Both sides had made a bum out of the town. Nothing was left but latitude, longitude, and broken brick.

We trotted through the rubbish in the general direction of the front. Up hill and down, cannoneers to the wheels, and how do you like the war by now? By sunset we reached a marked-down forest near Montreuil-aux-Lions, until a few hours before the shelter of the Twenty-sixth Division, now burning in the wake of the war. It was a litter of dead horses and men, broken wagons, dirty blankets, shelter halves, mess kits, rifles, and miscellaneous junk to the value of three Liberty Loans. The day was hot, the air clammy with death.

Yet it's an ill wind that gathers no moss. For once we were able to salvage all the food and equipment we wanted, including some curious luxuries. Somebody found a phonograph and one record. For the following twelve hours the deep tangled wildwood rang with the "Gamblin' Man Blues," over and over and *over* again:

"Dis niggah wuz a gamblah
An' a dice man frum-hum his haht.
Ev'ry time he'd hit a game
He'd bust it from th' staht.
He'd say: 'Kiss yo' money good-bye, coon,
It's mine befo' you staht,'
Wid a 'Honey—money—fare—thee—weell!'"

The officers had a foolish notion that the woods ought to be tidied up before we went out to play. A few burials were ordered. Hunting for picks and shovels the boys discovered a beer saloon, and there was an immediate and highly insubordinate stampede. The officers ran after and ordered Madame not to sell a drop. Madame took them seriously, waved her arms at the thirsty, and screamed "Feeneesh, feeneesh, feeneesh!" like the silly goose that she was.

It looked like a dry night until Porch Climber discovered a shell hole six feet in diameter in the rear wall of the saloon. Because the café was built on a slope the hole, although on the first floor, was thirty feet above the ground. Porch ascended like a Human Fly, using finger nails, teeth, and toes.

Rush Dyer was sent to the front door of the café to divert Madame. This was difficult, as Madame was in a temper, and he had to resort to amorous ways and means. "*Non, non,* NON!" said Madame.

"Oui!" said Rush firmly. Amid the exchange of vows Porch Climber ascended and stealthily lowered a case of Hennessey Three Star. That was more than enough, but Porch Climber was too thorough to quit while there was anything left. A case of Calvados descended, some beverage called Marc, several cases of wine, Triple-Sec, Benedictine, Scotch, and cordials, until all of Madame's storeroom stock was in her back yard. Incidentally her *"nons"* were getting fainter, so it was Heaven's judgment, probably.

We found wheelbarrows and pushed the booty back to camp. Several officers were about, but we disguised the loads with gunnysacks and swore loudly at the injustice of doing day labour after such a long and bitter hike. By dinner time we had cached nearly six hundred bottles of various intoxicants halfway up the hill across the road from the camp. Wild Bill Sloan was elected bartender, and the word went out—very cautiously—that the panic was on. Looting rhymed too well with shooting to advertise the party.

There would have been no trouble at all if Rush hadn't sampled the Calvados with Madame and now pronounced it ordinary American corn whiskey. This point was debated by Bill, considered an expert because he came from Tennessee. Rush's opinion was simply that of an amateur, said Bill, and proceeded to prove it.

The argument became bitter. Rush offered to drink an entire bottle, intending to identify the stuff by the effect it produced. This reasonable plan was misunderstood by Wild Bill, who considered that a race was on—and offered to spot him a bottle and drink the entire case.

Now Calvados is peculiar stuff. Veteran French boozers limit themselves to a tablespoonful, and at that, end up licking policemen and setting fire to the Arc de Triomphe. So in fifteen minutes curious things were happening. Bill had killed a bottle and a half—Rush a bottle, claiming that an old case of lockjaw had come back on him. The rest of the boys were smoothing individual bottles more temperately.

Rush, whom we knew to be a Southerner from Mississippi, began talking in hard Northern style and spoke long and circumstantially of his life among the Eskimos. For no reason he recited the list of his loves and made all of them out to be daughters of Senators and Governors.

Wild Bill cocked his automatic and offered to bore places for earrings in anybody present; he was not angry, he explained, merely expert. Herb Mooney was discovered taking off his shoes. He said that it was very late and that he didn't want to wake his wife. When last seen he was tiptoeing down the hillside carrying what looked like a couple of violin cases—if violin cases had heels. Bill had his ear to the ground by that time and thought he could discern the approach of revenooers. We had to disarm him. In time we slept where we fell.

Oh, oh, oh, and oh, what a morning! We picked ourselves out of trees, shell holes, mud puddles and from under the gun carriages and tried to stand up while Captain Stone laid into us. Fortunately Madame had not yet discovered her principal loss. The captain passed to the subject of identification tags, his favourite topic, and spoke of their use in the awful event of death. All of us felt that he was completely nuts. Death would have been a luxury at the moment.

A sick and sorry battery got the horses hitched somehow and moved out with the morning sun, bulging with bottles. All day long we marched through the heat and dust. The sun came through, a gigantic burning glass. There was no water, none at all. There wasn't a man in the battery who didn't envy the sprawling dead that festered along the road. A rugged few sought relief with more Calvados and promptly snapped the cookies. Rush, only the whites of his eyes showing, toppled in a heap of dead at the side of the road, and we didn't see him for months. A few fell off their horses. We passed wayside wells in the ruck of destruction. The sign "POISONED" was propped against their cool stone sides. We thought of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom and wept.

The sun was never bigger, more blinding, more merciless. Through Lucy and Bouresches and Belleau Wood, every span of wrecked white road revealing another village pounded into dirty dust.

Black and splintered sticks that had once been green forests. Rifles, rifles, rifles, upended in shallow graves. Over the butts, helmets, jauntily tipped to one side. So the grave diggers had been along. Yea. Wait till they saw us!

We slogged ahead, telling God that if He would do something about our beating temples and bulging eyeballs we would never in our lives take another drink—of Calvados. He answers prayer. At seven-thirty He took in the sun.

On till midnight our seventy-five-pound packs weighing first ninety, then a hundred, then a million pounds. Early in the morning we flopped in a wood near Epied, inhabited by a number of lucky stiffs—German, American, and French—and slept without removing our packs.

We woke and dug graves for our roommates. It was more comfortable with them out of the way. Somebody made crosses. We laid them with their faces to the East. Every forest and field was littered with bodies, and details poked among them for the sake of regimental records. The Germans had built a flock of dugouts and flop trenches in the field, a lucky break for us. We moved in, feeling comparatively safe, and mounted a dozen abandoned machine guns to feel safer.

Word came back that Ohio and New York were ready to attack. We pulled out of the woods at dusk and marched all night in a stinging rain—God knows why or where. Three times we were a thousand metres from the German lines, with guns and carriages tobogganing off the greasy roads like bobsleds. At every halt we flopped in the mud, sticking our shins in the spokes of the carriages. When the column moved ahead the wheel yanked the sleeper's leg. He arose, swore, and slogged onward.

Seven hours of this and we paused in a narrow ravine, a short city block from the German lines. The machine guns were desperately near. Dawn began to lighten over the black trees through the gray rain. There was a halt. The officers gumshoed back, whispering orders to hold the clanking harness joints in our hands for sake of silence and the girls back home. We waited one hour, cursing so loudly and sincerely that the officers were frantic.

At last a courier paddled up. He had been playing hide-and-go-seek with us all night long. Naturally it turned out that if he hadn't counted five hundred by fives the night before, we would never have started, as the attack had been called off before we left camp. Rain checks were in the mail.

We turned back, frothing at the mouth. It was daylight now—a soupy daylight, and the doughboys were shedding water like Airedales. Over their protests and those of our officers the men began making remarks that could be heard in Berlin. They weren't exactly detrimental to the Kaiser, either.

In desperate whispers the officers begged us to shut our yaps, but with no luck. We kicked the horses back to our old position without getting killed or even shot at, and fell in the flops. Shelter halves were oozing with mud, another result of the bonehead play; so we spread our blankets in the slime with black words that turned to sweetness and light when somebody sang:

"Kind words will never die,
Never die, never die.
God knows how deep they lie,
Deep in the breast."

Soothed by this thought we started out again, almost at once, slogging through two feet of mud, breaking our backs at the wheels. Up a long, long hill to a flat field full of dead people. French cuirassiers had been quarrelling with some uhlans the day before, and it looked like it. There they lay with their pretty lances—a hundred of them or more.

God's blessed sunshine came out and fell on the dead with such violence that we had to wear our gas masks in order to breathe. Burial details were doing their best, but with shells bouncing all over the field there was no use adding to the roll up Yonder. So they let them lie.

We ran a bad gauntlet and got the guns in place, opening up at once and firing all day and night. The Germans were hammering hell out of the entire field. A dozen big shells whanged into a hospital, a few hundred feet from the position. It went upsy-daisy. Unfortunately for atrocity statistics it was being used as a barracks at the moment.

Rushing coffee to the guns was like crossing the Delaware. The poor boobs who drew the job had to flop every three feet. They were called the acrobats and were applauded heartlessly by the battery after every burst. German planes swarmed over in a huff and raked every foot of road and field. It looked like plain bad temper.

We kept on firing the next day. From our ranges German resistance was tightening. Their planes became more numerous and nervy. French batteries at our right and left were smashed to bloody bits. We rapped everything that looked like wood. Innumerable gentlemen were gathered unto their fathers, great trees were uprooted by the black bursts, horses and men came running from the surrounding woods to scream and die in the field.

Strange rumours: The German machine gunners were shackled to their posts. (We saw none.) The doughboys were taking no prisoners. (For a day or two, when the lines of communication were forty long kilometres apart, there was apparently some truth in this.) Our infantry had executed several women masquerading as German soldiers. We did see the body of one woman, muddy and blue and too horrible; but she certainly hadn't been executed. The report probably derived from the curious evangelical resentment the men directed at her corpse. They certainly felt she *should* have been executed.

Endless stories of crucifixion, probably untrue. One German soldier leaned forward from an apple tree with a bayonet through his wishbone, but it looked to us as if some doughboy had been unable to dislodge his steel. Reports of officers shot in the back. Plain hooey, engendered by orders to the army to shoot any officer or man caught starting a panic. (Which orders were quickly rescinded.)

Directly in back of us a six-inch rifle blew up, and parts of the gun crew clumped past our ears. Seven men went bye-bye with that one, just when our own guns were hottest.

A German plane dived so low it nearly hit the camouflage. One bird was shot through the foot—a *bonne blessure* if he could get to the hospital without another wallop. Another had the fingers of his right hand torn off by a bomb. They were laying bombs like linoleum. It wasn't even funny.

Four days of this nonsense, firing all the time, sleeping in relays under the roaring guns, sweating, swearing, and singing the oldest songs we knew—"Blue Bell," "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?", "Meet Me in Dreamland," and "Kiss Me—" and suddenly eight German planes discovered our little hideaway. They circled over us at an altitude of two hundred feet, machine-gun bullets falling like hail. It looked like Good-bye, Joe, and See You Later.

At this point in the war Vic Stangel and a hero who shall be nameless (except that he is the writer of this here now narrative) laid the forward machine gun on one of them and brought him down to teach the rest a lesson. The pilot was pretty badly bored by tracer bullets and left apologies to the observer, who had been a bank clerk in Philadelphia—proving that Philadelphia bank clerks can't be trusted.

He tried to fraternize at once with much of stale slang.

"Oh, you keed!" he said, and expected to get away with it. The boys had difficulty in restraining the French, who wanted to work on him with their funny bayonets. His plane was split up into souvenirs, and the men returned to the guns, which had been operated by the cooler heads at the same cadence of fire. The aviator's seven pals were no fools. They beat it.

Up forward New York was crossing the Ourcq, which they insisted on calling the O'Rourke, the better to fit Irish orientations. They had been having a desperate time getting knocked off like flies. Joyce Kilmer, the poet, died here—gloriously.

At last they broke through. We hitched and followed, through the ghastliest scenes of the war. The roads were strewn with our doughboys, gray faces in the mud, blue hands frozen to their guns. Near the

Ourcq, a sixteen-inch shell had blown a German from his grave for the third time. His face bore such real resentment that some doughboy wrote a sign and hung it on his chest:

"For the love of God, leave me alone. I got appendicitis."

More bundles of what had once held life sprawled on the river's edge. German, American, and French—all gone, and nobody gave a damn. In the poppy fields the living lay with the dead; it was hard to tell which was which.

We paused at the Ourcq to eat, and some of the men, contemptuous of the shells that still snarled at its banks, tried to spit across the stream. Vic Stangel finally succeeded—although there was talk of cheating. In view of the dreadful loss of life it seemed important to put the river in its place.

Waist deep through the little river, straining at the wheels, screaming at the nags and socking them with helmets and rammer staffs. They had learned that any laziness on their part was rewarded by incalculable hard work on ours. You can't fool a horse. Result: They stood and cracked jokes with each other while we pushed the guns and carriages up hills and down dales by hand.

Over the river. We rolled along, turning out for shells and shell holes, until we reached a nasty crossroads, reeking with enemy fire. A dozen machine gunners, hot from the slaughter, tended their wounds and rolled cigarettes behind a broken wall. They watched us paddle past and wearily indicated the front.

"Go get 'em. Good luck."

Time and again we reached the front lines of doughboys, who also were feeling their way along. There was nothing spectacular about it. The Germans were running like hell in order to stand in the best possible place. Our principal danger was from machine-gun fire and planes skimming low over the road. One of these babies rustled through the trees and ran his kiddie car directly above our heads—not more than sixty feet off the ground. To rub it in he leaned over the cockpit and made faces. Two hundred automatics rang out, and not one bullet hit. A plane with American markings dived at the column and rattled away, wounding several of our horses and giving the boys a real good time. Our machine guns were mounted on the caissons. We put a ton of lead in the fathead's rudder.

Toward night we reached the Château de La Fère, which sounded like something from the *Three Musketeers*. It was a beautiful building, of the Ninth Century: old and lovely and rather sad. The Krauts had wired it in anticipation of our coming and the first man to pick up a Lueger automatic pistol, placed carelessly in the doorway, was supposed to send the château, battery, and several adjacent units smack to the Great Beyond. Very neat, but the first man to see the Leuger also thought to clip the communicating wires, and was taking target practice ten minutes later in the back yard of the château. You can't fool a former electrician. Furthermore, all that high explosive which was supposed to have gone off was carefully removed and used to cook corn willie.

Praise Gott from Whom all blessings flow.

The French genii crept through the goof trap and nipped the remaining wires, after which we gave it a thorough prowling. It was packed with more junk than a box from home. Two or three of the boys acquired slightly battered plug hats. Some delicate Louis XVI gilt chairs, upholstered in pale blue brocatelle, were tied to the caissons by a couple of æsthetes who wanted to sit pretty during the long hard days ahead. Some elaborate antique mirrors were nailed to the supply wagon for shaving purposes. There were hundreds of patent leather helmets, ladies' corsets, fancy pillows, oil paintings, and a case or two of brandy. The officers tried to confiscate the latter on the grounds that it was deadly poison, a transparent and childish ruse if ever there was one. We tried a little of it on the replacements. There wasn't a headache in a barrel of it.

Early the following night it was onward, Christian soldiers, all over again. The battery pulled out looking like Santy and all his reindeer. Every carriage was hung with souvenirs. Several of the boys were put under arrest for wearing high silk hats in place of helmets, although God knows what good arresting people did. Ten years in Sing Sing would have been a lark in comparison to the hoop-la *we* were having. That night's march topped them all for wilful, premediated discomfort. We weren't on the road five minutes before the Germans persuaded Gott to make it rain—a cold downpour that lashed up and down the mud roads all night long. Three times we lost our way. The trees dripped like great black sponges. The mud was so much cold mucilage. Everywhere pitch black, and puddles of ink.

The Germans also took to shelling the main roads with big cannon and slops shot up in geysers. We took a detour along a little road slicker than lard. Every ten minutes a caisson shimmied over the side. Tender hands unloaded it, put it back, reloaded it, and honest soldiers asked God if there ever *was* such a war. Horses fell at every step. So did the men. In the long waits caused by another gun carriage going kerplunk into the soup, we crawled under caissons, rolled forbidden cigarettes, and fell asleep in the mud before we could light up.

Morning came—rather, a depressing light tinged the mud and rain with gray. A string of New York doughboys appeared beside us in the road. They had flung all unnecessary equipment aside, preserving rifles, rations, and a single blanket apiece. They looked like wash-women, each with a blanket over his head, shawl style, with sodden poppies in their hats. Ordinarily we mixed with New York on sight and swapped experiences like monkeys, but it was no time for jabber now. The backs of our eyeballs were coated.

New York got forward march and waded on. As they left, a sergeant called: "Stick *wid* us, Hunert an' Forty-nine!"—comforting confidence.

We had been waiting for Lieutenant Skinner, who had been making a reconnaissance a kilometre or two ahead. He returned with his customary White Slave prediction that it was suicide to go ahead. Shells were bouncing like Indian clubs all over the prospective position.

So we crept forward—slop, slop, slop—and found a home abreast of the infantry in a field near Chéry-Chartreuse. Before the rain ceased and the German observation planes got busy we had stretched our camouflage and were digging deep.

Three days of shooting and bailing water from the pits. Our doughboys were relieved by infantry of the Fourth Division, who thought the war was played something like Post Office. Every day we gave them a swell rolling barrage with a vague idea that they were going over and clean up—an optimistic notion that vanished when we had to throw a defensive barrage ten minutes later.

Finally Colonel Reilly investigated and discovered that General Somebody-or-other couldn't advance because he didn't even know where his men were. The bawling out that followed was adequate compensation for all our troubles. Reilly's vocabulary was hell on privates but elegant on generals.

Somebody got a bright hunch, and we were moved to a position within spitting distance of the Vesle, then No Man's Land. Because of the defilade we were too close to fire into the enemy first lines, and it was worth your life to stick your snoot over the skyline. For a few days we sat tight and waited for the Fourth Division infantry to do their stuff, hoping that they would push the Germans back to something like our range. Horse lines were established near by; and while the drivers shagged ammunition, the cannoneers amused themselves by crawling on their bellies to the top of the crest for abandoned blankets and doughboy toilet articles. The dead were plentiful and well equipped. Again we slept on twelve blankets apiece.

The new horse lines were shelled silly. Some E Battery men were killed. One of the boys stopped some shrapnel. When they returned him to us some months later his head was stitched up like an American League baseball.

A raspberry patch was discovered in front of the position, within full view of the German lines—and the war was off until we had snaked a helmetful apiece. The Germans pestered the pickers with machine guns, but without much damage. Reserve rations were tapped for sugar, the Greek miraculously produced steak and potatoes, and for a few hours it was a good war; especially as the Germans obliged with a pretty attack during the afternoon. Without having to fire, it was fun to belly-flop on the crest and watch the battle.

It got around that we were having it soft, and Teacher sent us back to the positions we had just abandoned. Out getaway was attended by a spectacular air battle not sixty feet over the guns. A beautiful German plane, painted like a swallow, had fastened onto a Frog and was burning him up. We got all the surplus bullets, but it was a swell fight to watch. We finally rescued the Frenchman with some machine-gun stuff of our own.

The old positions looked like hell on our return. The Fourth Division had used them for picnics and card parties. We ran them bow-legged and moved in, full of apprehension. A position is good only as long as its location is a secret, and not so damned good then; whereas Hindenburg had a picture of *this* one in his watch.

This Fourth Division lived in a woods a few feet from the guns and fought the war with gas horns. Every fifteen minutes, day and night, honk would go the Klaxons, and we had to scratch and scramble for our gas masks. Where *we* came from, boys as noisy as the Fourth Division were sent to bed without their supper. The first few times it happened we spoke to them like gentlemen, but as the days wore on and horns wore out we began socking a few noses.

At last the Fourth Division agreed to use their horns only for gas.

One night the Germans actually did gas us, and we honked our own horns a bit. The Fourth Division, thoroughly impressed by our threat, didn't know whether to join in the alarm or not. So they sent over a top sergeant who must have been a Harvard boy, from his manners.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said to Lieutenant Kimball, "but is that gas for us or for you?"

He was advised to go back and see if his meter was working. If it was, the gas was for him. Somewhat mystified, he thanked us and left amid a barrage of wisecracks that were badly smothered by our gas masks. The meter joke was a favourite among the New York doughboys, who maintained that if we gave the Germans no quarter there would be no gas.

Once cured of their gas trouble the Fourth went in for grazing their horses in back of our guns. Now, if there is anything the Germans like to do, it is horse shooting, and a hail of shells began landing short, right in our laps. We lost our temper completely and defied death to tell the Fourth Division where to head in. A couple of us chased a lieutenant nearly a mile into the woods and would have killed him if we hadn't run out of breath. Thereafter the horse lovers fed their nags with spoons well within the woods.

We pegged shells for two days and were finally relieved by the 77th Division. Once more our horse-shoe worked, as the gun positions were hammered to hell five minutes after the guns were safely out. Every battery in the field was getting it hot and heavy as we pulled away.

We zigzagged back of the hill and raced to the rear, singing loudly. In six hours we tore off thirty kilometres, camping that night in the Forest of Châtelet. Mail and hot coffee were waiting; food, liquor, and a river. We peeled and washed our underwear. We hadn't had our clothes off in a month, and they were pretty lousy. A crap game started up and continued far into the night. There was a riotous free-for-all when a group of German planes began bombing the woods and the crapshooters refused to douse the glim. Martinus was on his sixteenth pass and didn't give a damn if the camp was bombed or not. The rest were broke and didn't care, either.

Three days' rest. A steel and concrete foundation near by was identified as the base of Big Bertha, the German's 100-mile gun. Our initials and home addresses were immediately chipped into the stone. We did some more washing and writing home and got prettied up for the next campaign.

Off again. According to universal rumour we were starting for Paris, there to have the *fourragère* bestowed upon us by the grateful French and to be kissed by all kinds of women. It was the one hundred and eighty-sixth time this pail of piffle had been passed around; but somebody got it right from the oats on the word of a French officer, and the battery gobbled it up again.

We stepped out toward Château-Thierry whistling "Madelon," poppies in our buttonholes and cornflowers behind our ears. Colonel Reilly was hiding behind every telegraph pole and offered to send the entire battery to Leavenworth if we didn't shed the boutonnières and act like soldiers. Several of the boys caught hell for kidding the officers.

We hit Château-Thierry in a cloud of dust. Thousands of German prisoners were busy repairing the damage. We told them they would have to pick up every brick or get no supper. The boys of German descent attempted conversation and got stepped on by the French, who were kicking the Germans in the pants and calling them *cochons*.

Through the white dust to Vaux and Lucy Bocages. What a hike! No water again. Twenty men were promised a court-martial when they broke at the first *eau potable* sign. Porch Climber stole four cases of canned peaches from the officers' mess. We ate them at the first halt, tossing the empty cans back into the officers' supply wagon for luck. Some Y. M. C. A. men appeared and sold candy—another proof of its existence overseas. Hep, hep, hep all afternoon. At sundown we reached the Marne and pitched pup tents in a peaceful meadow on the river's edge. Immediately there was an epidemic of A. W. O. L.—and Paris.

CHAPTER VI

Only two privates out of the entire battery got passes to Paris, which confirmed our incipient hunch that they had been serving the captain in some low manner. It was supposed that they took him an apple every morning, or else snapped the cookies whenever he was sick. There was *something* crooked about it, whatever it was.

Fortunately, the captain went to Paris himself; leaving two hundred and some odd hoodlums in charge of a nervous sorority of lieutenants.

There was no immediate disturbance. After six solid months in the line, with no rest or relief, our present premises looked pretty good. The winding Marne gently elbowed our pup tents, and the green grass grew all around. Diving boards went up, and a baseball diamond was marked out. Presently the grind of the Ourcq and the Champagne dwindled into pleasant dreams.

In the evening we hitched motor trucks to La Ferté, six kilometres away, and hooked up with our doughboys. The great deeds of the past six weeks were calmly appraised in corner cafés, and we were forced to the conclusion that no division in France or Germany or the world had been so glutted with glory as the Rainbow. Bananas were on sale in La Ferté. We hadn't seen any in nearly a year; and presently the sidewalks were littered with peels for generals and their ilk to slip on.

From La Ferté to Meaux was ten kilometres, and from Meaux to Paris, twenty. It looked easy, but the entire distance was lousy with Marine M. P.'s. They patrolled the railroads, hid in the bushes, lined the streets, and came out of the floor in every café and coeducational centre. Always they wanted to know who we were, where we were going, what were we doing, and were we looking for trouble? It was pretty hot, and we had shed a few clothes, so they yapped:

"Where the hell's your blouse?"

The answer to this one was easy and immediate:

"I left it up at the front where they *ain't* no Marines."

The M. P.'s usual reaction to this remark was to shove a .45 automatic in the wisecracker's face with the right hand and slug him with the left. Mr. Colt certainly brought a lot of injustice into the world with his inventions.

Often, of course, these S. O. S. cowboys would bump into the wrong guys. One of them poked his gat into the pansy face of Mr. Mike Donaldson, proprietor of one cauliflower ear and twenty-two decorations for heroism, including the Medal of Honour. Mike was very calm.

"What kind of a barrage do you think you can throw with that?" he asked mildly. The Marine made some rude reply. Mike grabbed the .45 and rapped him over the skull till it rang like a Chinese gong. Then we hung him over a comfort station and proceeded to Paris. Incidentally Mike was Stanley Ketchel's sparring partner some years before he joined up with our doughboys. He was quite a trial to the Marines at different times.

Five war-worn sightseers thought to beat the rest to Paris by flipping freight trains. An empty box car rattled by, and they climbed on. For a while everything was Jake. The most promising milestones whizzed by—"Paris 22K."; "Paris, 17K."; "Paris, 13K."—and then there was a slight mix-up. The train shot through a tunnel. The next signpost read "Paris, 19K.," the next, "Paris, 25K.," until it became apparent that the engineer was heading for the Somme, where a hot scrap was going on. That engineer was war crazy; or else a Marine M. P.

To make matters worse the train was tearing along at sixty miles an hour, and the first stop was fifty miles from the battery. It took the hookey players two days to get back, having had no fun at all; only hard hiking and a lot of back talk from Marines.

Anticipating Cook's tours the officers had warned us that we were on the Marne for only one day; so most of the battery returned in two, with pop-eyed accounts of the Eiffel Tower, hand-to-hand encounters with more Marines, wild women and experiences with same, together with many narrow escapes from the vicious commander of the American Military Prison at Paris.

Captain Stone had returned, bulging from swell dinners. He at once declared he would have the law on us all and might have carried out his threats had not a catastrophe occurred early the following morning.

Vern Sheetz, one of the most popular men in the battery, got up before reveille and dived into the Marne. He became entangled in a mass of sedge and sank before the rest of the battery could reach him. Endless attempts at resuscitation failed, and it was discovered that he had died of heart failure.

The needless death of a swell guy is more damaging to army morale than a successful drive. We buried him in a little parish cemetery overlooking the Marne and moped for a week. Walter Birkland remarked that God was a bum picker. He is, at times. Walter was the next to go.

Rush Dyer, whom we left in a pile of dead at Château-Thierry, suffering from the worst hangover in the history of the war (the universal hangover that descended on the entire battery), returned to us the next day, bright and pink and rested. His malady had been diagnosed as gas poisoning, and the French talked of giving him a medal.

They didn't go that far, but they did put him in a hospital next door to a factory full of women, which gave our Romeo something to talk about for a month. In his usual reminiscences, Dyer had always operated among débutantes or their betters. He now explained that many of the factory hands were countesses who had descended to toil from patriotic motives.

Asked why he had ever left such an Eden, Dyer looked glum and confessed that his Southern prejudices had been wounded again. Apparently the French had bunked him next to a large and very black Moroccan, whom they unreasonably and assiduously protected from the assaults of the Mississippi Lily. Moreover, the countesses displayed such disgusting interest in his neighbour that there was nothing to do but convalesce and get out.

Even convalescence was made difficult by the Moroccan, who began to smell up the whole place. Daily the nurses and doctors fumigated him with formaldehyde. He only smelled worse. Finally his mattress was overturned and the source of all the trouble was made known. It concealed his belt, with eight human ears sewed to it. He made a terrible scene when deprived of this souvenir.

Moroccans were fussy about their ear collections, as they considered the good qualities of their former proprietors reverted to the collector. Right enemy ears were preferred; although they let their consciences be their guides and frequently swore that the owners of the left ears were southpaws. We saw them pinching a few at the Ourcq.

On the afternoon of the fourth day in camp we were ordered to move. As usual the hike lasted all night long. As usual we scuffed forty kilometres through the choking dust in a direction exactly opposite to our destination. This was done to give us strong legs.

At Trilport we loaded into box cars and rattled along the Marne. The railroad had been wrested from the Germans a few days before, and the route was a panorama of panic and sudden death. Pontoons, ripped with shell, stood on end in the river. A lot of gents had gone to glory there.

Gaping towns, ground into dust. Optimistic refugees poking about looking for papa's pipe. Finally Saint Dizier and a rum-and-coffee station. Thence to Domblain, which must mean water tank in French. That's all there is there. We debarked and stepped out for thirty-five mean kilometres, ending up at Huillécourt.

The army and navy forever! Three cheers for the Red, White, and Blue! On arrival, Captain Stone unbelted with the information that we were to rest in Huillécourt six weeks! The fact that we were given a kick in the pants and told to move on nine days later made no difference. We took the announcement seriously and prepared to enjoy ourselves.

Huillécourt consisted of a string of houses on a village street, a hundred yards long, at the most. There were two cafés—both restricted to the sale of light wine and beer at legal hours. Consequently both sold everything we wanted, any time we wanted it.

In the houses were contrivances called beds—the first we had seen in more than a year. We slept like ground hogs. The natives liked us. We liked the natives. Everything was elegant.

The women had big feet and looked like sausage balloons, but rigours of the front had materially affected any fixed ideals of our dreams. Most of the boys had a very low boiling point, anyhow. The little Greek waxed his moustache ten minutes after the kitchen had been installed in the front yard of a little seamstress, and we had to watch our rations like a hawk.

The slightest shortage of stew was attributed to his amorous designs, although he assured us fervently that he meant the lady no harm. No more harm than a puff adder. The seamstress complained to Frenchy Somant that the Greek appeared at her window the first night bearing a large tenderloin steak and winking in a manner that could not be misunderstood. When she resisted his advances he lost his temper and beat her several times over the head with the steak.

Somant felt obliged to punch him publicly in the nose; a gesture that was regarded as something chivalrous and fine until Monsieur Somant moved into the lady's house and began diverting the battery's supply of Y. M. C. A. cookies and jam to softer uses.

Inspired by M. Somant's example, love made its gentle influence felt in the battery and the boys went completely sissie—combing their hair, shining their shoes, shaving five times a day, and otherwise seeking to ingratiate themselves with the female element of the population.

Crap games were abandoned. Drinking ceased; even so inveterate a poker shark as the news-stand proprietor from Chicago put Lady Luck out of his life for three whole days while he addressed himself to a large sack of fat known as Fleurette, whose mouth would have been a lifelong career for some competent dentist. Fleurette had a musical ear and demanded that her admirer do something about it. Joe's voice was splendid in soliciting his favourite odds of two to one or four, but when raised in song it affected adjacent ear drums something like dull safety-razor blades.

Fleurette liked it, however; and long past bedtime the loud and tender discords of "The Sunshine of

Your Smile" caromed down the village street, bouncing off all the walls:

"Deeeeer face, that ho-o-olds
So sweeeeeeeet-a sum-ile for meeeee . . ."

(Every time Fleurette smiled it was like looking down a coal mine. It would have been fatal to go in there with a lighted match.)

In the centre of town dwelt Marie Jeanne and Helène, the *jeunes filles* of the neighbourhood, and very sweet they were, too, all organdy and blushes. Papa was a veteran of 1870 and sported a Médaille Militaire, the one incorruptible bonafide certificate of heroism in France. He was very pleasant but cagey; and such boys as sat in his garden of an evening had to chew cloves and bring a letter from their pastor.

The officers tried to compete with us in this quarter, but we were there first and effectively spiked all their amorous attempts by informing the old gentleman that they represented the very lowest stratum of American society and were not to be trusted around decent girls like his daughters. He was greatly astonished and said he had always thought officers had to be gentlemen before they were commissioned. That was the French system of things, he pointed out.

We explained that our particular battery had volunteered from the most exclusive club in America; an organization devoted to such artistic and purely social pursuits that when the war came along and we wanted to enlist, nobody knew the first thing about discipline or drill. So we were forced to hire some fellows who did that sort of thing. We inferred darkly that most of the officers had been ex-convicts, anxious to restore their citizenship by military service. At any rate, we didn't talk to them ourselves and suggested that he follow our example.

Our superiors never understood the coldness with which their attentions were received; especially when the garden was filled with second-class privates, showing three very pretty girls pictures of the Woolworth Building and lying about all the automobiles and motor boats they had. The girls reciprocated with a stereoscope and unlimited supplies of export *cassis avec vermouth*. Here and there the pressure of a hand was returned (when Papa wasn't looking) and several of us were asked to dine.

The officers nearly went crazy trying to pierce Papa's mysterious reserve. They sent him baskets of wine (which we drank) and ordered Sylvester to serenade the house with everything from "Bedelia" to the Marseillaise. From the garden the concert sounded charming.

Such a situation called for consequences. Under the alibi of exercise the battery was given squads east and west all day long, with plenty of detail work to fill in. There was some comfort in knowing that two of the officers were baking in the sun, too; and that the rest weren't getting past the girls' front door.

Another Huillécourt diversion was to tease old Papa Pierre, who was ninety-one years old and curiously proud of it. It was his habit to sit in his door yard and accost all passers-by with *"Quel âge avez-vous?"* His voice was tinged with an offensive superiority as he demanded this information. Plainly Papa Pierre thought that anyone under ninety would never amount to anything.

So in answer to his question, we invariably said, "Ninety-five," a reply that sent the old man into a fit of rage that nearly did for him more than once. He called us liars, illegitimate, *cochons,* and many other things we did not understand. But we stuck to our point; we were older than he was, and Papa finally took to his bed in a state bordering on apoplexy, after charging among us with his stick.

On the ninth day of our six-weeks' rest we were ordered to shove off for another front. The greatest secrecy shrouded our destination. A thousand sectors were suggested, from Macedon to Lower California. The French with whom we lived got out their maps and pointed to St. Mihiel, which seemed a strange sidelight on the war. The captain didn't know where we were going; General Pershing didn't know; none but all French voters between the ages of sixteen and sixty were in on the secret.

Bonfires and cheers attended our departure from the village late that night. The ladies put on their best satin dresses and lined the road, calling, "*Bonne chance*" and "*Au revoir.*" A few of them wept, bless their hearts.

One gent, whose blue-eyed boobery concealed the cunning of a fox, remained behind. He was missed and torn from the arms of another fellow's girl. In simple fashion he told the captain that she had contracted to bake him a pie which he had intended to give to the captain. He carried a large pie in support of his alibi. Torn by jealousy, our offended buddy pinched the regimental bicycle and burned up the road to visit Italian vengeance on the weak and fickle sister. He returned with four pies.

Three days of stiff night marches brought us to Reubeville, where the rubes come from. Here we were paid, and Joe Percival spent a cool two hundred francs testing the town's supply of rum. He was joined in this project by Herb Mooney and Don Coe, who wanted to dissolve a bitterness deriving from the captain having addressed them as booze hounds. By the time of departure the three were engaged in a fist fight over the correct way to conjugate the French verb "to be." There seemed to be three opinions and no alliances.

Captain Stone was sore as a goat. He announced that all three should precede the battery in its march to the next town as a solemn warning to the rest. The punishment was all right in theory but not in practice, as the three tipplers held up the march all night long by their frequent and rowdy arguments as to which of them should present their concerted opinion of the captain to the captain—on vellum. Each fought for the privilege. All won.

When we reached Neufchâteau Captain Stone sentenced the trio to a bit of carriage washing, the same to last until dawn. The horrible examples waited until they thought the captain had gone to bed, whereupon they indulged in immoderate guffaws.

"Pretty soft!" observed Mr. Percival. "All we got to do is to throw a pail of water over the carriages and go to bed. That guy's so dumb he'll never know the difference. I'll bet he doesn't know what army he's in, even."

"I'll take that bet!" said Captain Stone, standing directly beside them in the night. "And those chevrons, Percival."

The rum consumers scrubbed carriages for the next two days without sleep or rest.

A list of new corporals and first-class privates was read on our second day at Neufchâteau. It was here that the captain spoke of making the writer of this absorbing narrative a first-class private—and then meanly changed his mind, on the grounds of irresponsibility. Nobody had asked him for promotion and the crack seemed gratuitous.

Ike Sawyer, whose heroic conduct at the Ourcq was ignored in the promotions, waited on the captain to learn why he was overlooked. All of us were a little surprised, as Ike had always seemed like such a nice fellow. Now he was acting as if he didn't *want* to be a private any more.

The captain inferred that he was saving Mr. Sawyer's promotion until he had captured a German sausage balloon, copped the Kaiser's under pants, and demolished the Hindenburg Line—all in one day. Whereupon Mr. Sawyer became quite pink and publicly told his commanding officer of many things that could be done with corporals' chevrons, adding that he didn't want them in the first place. This last remark didn't square him with the boys, however. Ambition had headed its ugly rear too conspicuously for that.

Before leaving Neufchâteau we ran into some of the various welfare organizations we had always heard about and had never seen. A theatrical company appeared and presented "Baby Mine" in a natural amphitheatre back of the barracks. Women who spoke English were rare, and we paid serious attention to Baby and none to her difficulties. The next day a beautiful and rowdy young lady appeared and sang slightly off-colour songs. That was more like it. There were ninety-nine encores.

Free suggestion to the War College: In the next war lay off Art.

Another day or two and we were ordered to rise and shine. Lieutenant Colonel Smith led the column and seemed to think there was a fire or that he was Sheridan with Winchester still twenty miles away. He ran us bow-legged all the way to Brancourt. Fried rabbit and eggs in this burg. Look for a white cross on the third door.

We had hardly landed in town, panting like Pomeranians, when we were ordered on. Loud squawks arose. Our shoes had burned up getting there, and the men had found a real brewery. However, the centuries looked down upon us, and we limped on. Forty-five kilometres was the gaff that night, after nearly twenty during the day. Put them all together they spell Mother.

Early the next day, in a blinding rain we crawled up one steep cliff and down another, then back again to the base of the first cliff, where our camp was cunningly discovered by the officers. The climbs up and down were intended to qualify us as ski jumpers in case Pershing wanted anything done in the Alps. Going up and coming down, the roads were smeared with Grade B lard. One of E Battery's guns slid over the precipice, seriously injuring two men.

An imitation village squatted at the foot of the hill beside a seedy canal. Here we ate, drank, and made merry all day long. The proprietor owned a piano—the first we had seen in nearly a year. Ten sous dropped in a slot made it go to work on three tunes; our favourite selection being "Sur le Pont de Paris." Lyricists of the A. E. F. had long ago revised this number into: "Après la Guerre est Fini." It was sung from Switzerland to the sea.

During the afternoon we shepherded all the ladies in town and threw a dance that lasted until the column was on the march. The event was slightly marred by the ladies unfortunate comprehension of "Après la Guerre," which the boys insisted on singing as they whirled their welterweights about the floor.

Another night's march over soupy, pitted roads. Through Toul on the trot, with the boys snatching at doughnuts held out by Salvation Army lassies like rings on a merry-go-round. What those poor girls heard whenever a driver missed a sinker and it rolled in the mud! In the early dawn we squashed into a wet woods near Mandres.

Five days we waited here for the impending attack—five days during which we watered and scrubbed and manicured the nags, tried to send German helmets home, and renamed the guns.

The first piece was christened: "There's a Reason." To supplement the idea Jack Walsh painted a large German soldier on the shield. The German was quite terrified, his hair standing every which way, and his arms high in the air. A balloon issuing from his mouth contained the words: "I Give Up."

We were a little nervous about this design. Not all Germans were that way, and we were likely to run into a few of them personally one of these days.

The second piece was named "Hell's Belle" and revealed a lady in a red Venetian mask. This was considered the cat's whiskers—quite equal to the monicker Indiana had painted on one of their guns—"Old Dutch Cleanser."

"Americanische Bluff" were the fighting words applied to the third piece; and "The Reaper" designated the fourth, which carried a spirited portrait of Death making marmalade out of eight Germans with a big scythe. All things considered, naming the guns registered the last burning moment of passionate patriotism that we experienced in the entire war. It would have been quite difficult to live up to those bitter words.

Another regiment of Chicago origin appeared in the mud of Mandres—the old 1st Illinois Cavalry. It was commanded by Colonel Milton J. Foreman, an ardent patriot, a pearl among commanders and a relative newcomer in action. For some reason, this budding Napoleon resented our proximity to his men. Perhaps it was because we were in the habit of referring to them as the Dog and Pony Show and the North Clark Street Light Horse.

Such appellations were never intended seriously. At their worst they were merely luxurious epithets that seniors in the business of war apply to freshmen, and they were certainly wiped out by our compatriots' gallant conduct in subsequent battle. But whatever the reason for his prejudice Colonel Foreman served notice on his men that they were to have nothing to do with us.

Without counting ten (we were told) he referred to us as "riff-raff." We forgave him the term on the grounds that he had just reached France and had let the war go to his head. Anyhow, in our eight months of action better names than that had been invented to describe us. The Prussian Guards called us Black Diphtheria, for instance.

More and more men squeezed into the woods; doughboys, artillerymen, and engineers in ten thousand lots. There wasn't room for them all, and it began to look as if something hot was on the fire. Tanks clanked by—hundreds of them. They were some fast whippets—a type we had never seen before. Big guns, little guns, medium-sized guns; minnewerfers, machine guns, and bombs. Ammunition was piled in mountains; enough to blow up the world. It certainly looked like trouble for somebody.

A courier dashed up, dismounted, saluted just like they do in the movies, and handed Captain Stone an order. And what an order!

> An attack will be made against the German positions on the morning of September 12. The mission of Battery F will be to accompany the infantry over the top, for fire at point-blank ranges.

Of all the cockeyed, stark, staring, tittering ways to win a war, that won the brown derby. Firing by deflection from under camouflage was dangerous enough. Now they wanted us to wheel our cannon over the trenches, through the barbed wire and use them for 45's. It was like killing a fly with a sledge hammer, except that we couldn't help wondering what the Germans would be doing all the time we were hauling the guns over the top. In this connection it was recalled that the St. Mihiel positions had been stormed again and again throughout the war, and that each time the Allies had been repulsed with frightful losses; adding up to one thousand men for every minute they had held the German first-line trench.

Captain Stone called for volunteers. The response was unanimous. That's the worst part of a call for volunteers. It takes more courage to say No than Yes.

Arising magnificently to his opportunities the captain made a great speech in which he said that it was the first time a battery of artillery had undertaken a stunt of this kind and that he knew we would put it over on account of our being such Fearless Heroes. We began to feel the same way ourselves, and spent the evening writing letters home, cracking bum jokes that were received with hysterical hilarity, and singing such old favourites as "Blue Bell," "Good-bye, Dolly Gray," and "Just Before the Battle, Mother"—with rude variations, of course.

CHAPTER VII

THE condemned men ate a hearty breakfast, gave the horses a kick in the pants, and paddled out for St. Mihiel in the early hours of September 10th.

A dozen times the guns and carriages stalled on the pitch-black road as another tank bit the bog and foundered up ahead. We were milling through a trail of slum fifteen feet wide and choked with all the horses and men in the A. E. F.

It was two in the morning, rush hour at the front. Miles of dripping doughboy ghosts slopped along at our left whispering the same sad song:

"The old gray mare, she ISUNT what she USED to be,
ISUNT what she USED to be, ISUNT what she USED to be,
The old gray mare, she ISUNT what she USED to be,
Many long Yeeeeeeeeeers ago."

The whisper ran down the column in exact ratio to its progress forward, so that for three hours we were cheered by the same monotonous verse as it passed our given point. We got slightly on edge after the first forty-five minutes. The entire matter of the old gray mare could have been cleaned up in half that time.

Our positions seemed to be in the second line of doughboys. Moving in was a bit desperate, but was accomplished without casualties. We sat down to wait. A bleak few hundred yards ahead, just over the hill, was the wide and ragged trench system we were scheduled to cross with the first wave. Some engineers waited on us and promised to bridge the narrowest point of the first line, which was some comfort. It meant that we might not have to haul the guns over by hand after all.

The barbed wire never looked so thick and uncomfortable. Apparently the Germans didn't want any visiting. Zip went their 77's and Bang went the big babies, and we weren't even allowed to fade them. All our shells were being held for point-blank fire. Even the machine gunners were forbidden to pick at the crows that wheeled over the guns.

The Germans spotted our ammunition dumps and began lamming them with everything they had. It was tough on our drivers, who had to work through the bursts and pick out the shells before they blew up in their fingers.

Several horses were killed at one of the dumps, and the boys had to step some to finish loading, cut mortally wounded horses from the traces, and snap out of the danger zone alive. Every man had to do three men's work and do it fast. A certain driver ran like a whitehead, and nothing the boys yelled in his wake would induce him to come back. Over his shoulder he announced that he had a wife to think about.

"She LOVES me!" he bawled as he continued to pick them up and lay them down on the greasy homeward track. That boy was a great mudder. The notion that somebody loved him served to amuse, and the gents sat down in the mud and had a good laugh.

The rest of the party wasn't much fun. Charlie Linde's arm was shot nearly off, helmets were badly battered, and two of the surviving horses had to be shot. They made the last wild lap with guts dragging in the mud.

The happily married man was dropped socially. To the end of the war he was given noncombatant chores and addressed by his last name.

All day long the gun crews lay in their flop trenches, pulling their ears in tight and writing grim letters home. The chaplain was bow-legged from the weight of mail (to be sent only in case we went what the boys never called West). Sentiment thus disposed of, we began kidding each other as behooved brave men and cracked many jokes about taking 75's over the top. None of them were very funny, but they were hysterically received.

A withering enemy fire stung the lines all day long. At night Captain Stone had a big powwow with Wild Bill Donovan, commander of New York's old Sixty-ninth, our dearly beloved doughboys. Because our stunt was without precedent the captain got carte blanche. He decided to shoot when we saw the whites of their eyes, just like Prescott or somebody.

A nervous lull broken by gabby machine guns here and there. A bunch of tanks crept up so silently that we didn't see them until they were on top of us. If we hadn't been sleeping two feet underground a lot of us would have been hash, as they literally ran over the flops. We bawled them out for a lot of meatheads with many a "Where do you think you are, you so-and-so-and-so-and-so? Fifth Avenue?" They came back with amateur S. O. S. remarks, all stale, and dipped silently ahead and out of vituperative range.

We waited, snoring, copping a smoke or biting our nails, according to individual temperament. The hours dragged by. Then BLOOIE——

The entire front blew up. The attack was on, and very pretty, too. White-hot tracer shells laced the night with fire as they sped back and forth. Every rocket and flare in Europe went up on the dot. Liquid fire dripped into the trenches from above. The smash of sound almost equalled the Champagne as thousands of cannon chewed their wad of brimstone and spit it out. A concentration was located. We pulled some fire at machine-gun speed, glad to have something to do.

A badly scared sun came over the hills. We got an order to cease fire and get ready to go over. The tanks already were drawn up in battle formation a hundred yards ahead. After standing in the roads all night, dodging confetti, the drivers were ordered up. They came on the gallop. A Monsieur Cantini wheeled up his famous point-blank battery at the same time and went into action within spitting distance. We looked his battery over with the proud consciousness that we were about to go it one better. Up in the front line, the doughboys were beginning to stir.

We limbered and waited. The poor bums of E and D batteries maintained their fire. We pitied them from the bottom of our hearts, or maybe we didn't. But we said so—loudly and a bit derisively, to the echo of a friendly razz.

Buckety-buckety-buckety. A courier galloped up.

"Is it a pardon?" asked Johnnie Foster, who had been reading up on Civil War stuff.

The courier brought cookies and cigarettes—presents from Colonel Reilly, an ominous circumstance in itself. Nobody ever heard of a colonel sending presents to his men. Not Reilly, anyhow. He was a swell guy but hell on wheels socially. Obviously there was something very fishy about this cookie business. Slowly it dawned on us that it was a deathbed donation. The colonel was sorry now for all the names he had called us and he was trying to square himself at the last minute. He knew we were going to die and was getting superstitious. There is no military rank in the Hereafter.

We choked on the cookies and resolved not to sell ourselves so cheaply. Then a second lieutenant did a comical sit-fall in a muddy shell hole. Gloom vanished immediately. We laughed ourselves sick and started out.

Long lines of doughboys trudged abreast in the rain. It began to let up a bit, and the sun poked through the clouds. Laboriously, we pushed and pulled at the guns and got them up the hill in back of the first-line trenches.

The view was grand. On our left was Mont Sac, peppered with pearls. The boys were snowballing with shrapnel. Below us the valley, chewed to pieces and cluttered with machine guns and barbed wire. Up and down its dirty floor rolled a perfect barrage, whiter than an angel's wing. The doughboys were scrambling out of the trenches, clicking bayonets into place and yelling obscure things to each other. Their officers ran after, yelling: "Dress on the right, you gosh dam* lousy doughboys!" The lines filled up and trailed abreast of the tanks, which dipped and bobbed like cautious old ladies. They stopped at shell holes and seemed to hesitate. You felt they had left their rubbers home. Then a flash from the turret. A one-pounder into a patch just ahead, and two German machine gunners with their hands in the air.

The doughboys strung along like crowds following a golf match, slowly and deliberately—dressing on the right whenever they were told. Here and there a man stumbled and fell. The line moved on under a cataract of shrapnel and high explosive.

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*Approximately.

Suddenly a flock of German shells reminded us that the crest was no place for a battery of field artillery. We played hide-and-go-seek for a nervous ten minutes until one of our heavies located the boys and played a xylophone solo on their guns. In the meanwhile the engineers had thrown a few planks over the first-line trench. We rattled across and caught up with the infantry.

It was a long, tough pull across No Man's Land. The night's rain had made it a duck pond, and it was cannoneers-to-the-wheels all the way. Time and again the guns and caissons sank to the hubs in mud thicker than tar. We laid on them with a "Yeeeooo!" The drivers yanked off their helmets and socked the horses, and we got them out every time. God knows how. By that time the tanks were gasping in the mud, unable to budge an inch. Maybe our expertness was due to the fact that we were such swell targets whenever we stood still.

Halfway across the bog the sun sailed out from behind a cloud. Bayonets flashed for twenty miles. In the same moment a rainbow ran across the sky, and the division for which it was named let out a yell that rang high above the roaring barrage. Obviously it meant *Gott Mit Uns*. Supernatural or not, that rainbow was the big thrill of the war.

We scrambled over the German trenches and rolled merrily down the Seicheprey–St. Baussant road, catching up with the doughboys at Essey. The dead of both armies lay along the way, though not in the numbers we had seen at the Ourcq. There were some odd cases of mutilation and the usual macabre remarks. One German was beaten to death with a doughboy's shovel. The job was severely criticized, and there was some talk of catching the doughboy and making him do it all over again. Two stretcher bearers struggled past, carrying a mountainous officer.

"A lazy man's load!" we yelled, and so on. Through Essey, to Pannes, where the army came to a halt. Immediately tension snapped. All the steam we'd been saving for nearly two days fizzed like a wet firecracker. We had dragged our guns over the top and we were alive. All of us were alive. What a lousy battle! Fervently we hoped that the chaplain hadn't mailed any of those letters. Why, these German gussies were rookies. Who ever told *them* they were soldiers? Their mothers? Etc.

They were straggling down the road by the thousand, guarded by handfuls of doughboys. We roosted on the trails of the guns, kidding the pants off them for being such mamma's boys. Whole regiments had surrendered at once and now trooped by, waving sheets of American propaganda.

These pamphlets, printed in German, had been broadcast by our aviators the day before the battle. In them the hungry Heinies were promised everything but the White House if they would quit clowning around and surrender. *Weissbrot, marmeladen, schweinfleisch,* a wide choice of magazines, a dollar a day, good music, pretty girls, and a beautiful view. Whoever wrote that junk made the prison camps sound like night clubs. He also put a swell battle on the bum.

We stopped some of the Heinies in their happy rush for *Marmeladen* and *Weissbrot* and frisked them for schnapps. Some brisk trading went on until the officers interfered. A can of corn willie was worth an Iron Cross, first class, and ten francs would buy any helmet in the whole push. Swell helmets, with spikes on them. It didn't occur to us to simply grab.

Some of the officers were pretty snooty, especially when we asked for schnapps. A few spoke English and said they would have nothing to do with common soldiers—only colonels, like themselves. We worked on two or three of these babies. A Ritzy Hauptmann had one hung on his nose right in front of his men. His monocle was tossed up for grabs.

The front was everywhere. A snappy *Oberleutnant* cantered up on a beautiful horse, holding out his sword in surrender. One of our dumb lieutenants misunderstood the *beau geste* and had him hauled down and carried away. We blushed at the German's pained surprise and decided to send all our lieutenants to military school.

A startling rumour passed down the line! Porch Climber had prowled a German canteen and discovered a barrel of real beer! Pilsener! There was a panic. The officers again shouted that it was poison, put there on purpose. We never fell for *that* gag.

We swarmed into the canteen like locusts and found—not one barrel of beer but two! The rush was so great that Porch Climber divided the men into two lines. We got out our mess cups, Porch knocked the stoppers out of both kegs and we filed by in something like order. Half the battery had been served when a doughboy general squeezed through the narrow door. The lookout had deserted the door to take his place in line.

The general's rage was terrible.

"Stop this looting!" he thundered. The boys pegged him for an officious lieutenant and told him to soak his head. (He had a slicker over his stars.) The general foamed at the mouth and announced that everybody present was under arrest. We told him to button his nose. Obviously one general can't arrest a battery.

He realized this himself and elbowed his way out, squawking for the military police. But we were in the German lines and there weren't any police. That's one reason why we were there. And so we continued to rush the kegs, while the general formed a detail outside. When both barrels were empty we escaped through a back window in time to form part of the posse to arrest ourselves. There was a great deal of breath smelling on the part of the general and threats to shoot, but nothing ever came of it. It's against the law to shoot people.

This pleasant interlude was ended by orders to shove off and catch more Germans. We were in a good mood now and sang as we tramped abreast of the doughboys. Also, we knew our oats a little better. Whenever a gun or caisson stuck in a shell hole we gathered a mob of retreating Heinies and made them pull it out, still twitting them for not putting up a good scrap. More schnapps and Iron Crosses.

On the edge of La Marche we halted and let the doughboys run up and take the town. We were still waiting for point-blank fire, but the captain passed up all the good targets. He was afraid that we might be walking into a trap and didn't want to shoot until shot at.

Through La Marche, which the doughboys had taken by going "Boo!" at the Germans. We rested in a field outside the town with our boy friends from Alabama.

They were equally disgusted with the Germans' lack of resistance and when groups of Heinies went by, Alabam's rifles clicked and it was all we could do to keep them from taking pot shots. They assured us that they would only nip off an ear or two. We gossipped a little and sympathized with their bitterness over the replacement system. They complained that the government had shipped them a lot of Northern sissies and yellow bellies in place of the starry roughnecks who yelled and died in the Champagne and beyond the Marne.

A squadron of American planes appeared and circled overhead in Ferris-wheel formation. Like saps we waved at them. Immediately they dived into the field, spraying us with machine-gun bullets. There was a howl of rage and surprise from the army. Some bright blue language went up.

The half-wit aviators kept it up, horses and men dropping right and left. Every rifle in the field rattled back. Ray Quisno and Sam Wallace jumped for the battery machine guns, and tracer bullets began to smoke into our bright war birds' back. They sailed away followed by brimstone curses and more shots in the back. If we could have brought one of them down we would have torn his heart out.

Obviously they had mistaken us for Germans. (By that time the column was five miles ahead of our wagon trains.) But that did *us* a fat lot of good. Two of the doughboys were dead; several were wounded, and two more missed death by an eyelash. Their clothes were ripped by the bullets. Some of the horses were nicked.

Bitterness quickly vanished with the discovery of some elegant souvenirs—field glasses, spiked hats, cameras, and Leuger automatics—all piled in an empty shack. This was something like it. War was a swell institution again. Also we ran across some German canned salmon that had our own reserve rations skinned to death.

Turning the corner of the Bois de Thiancourt we encountered two German batteries on the run. Guns were immediately unlimbered, and we got ready to polish them off. They were only three or four blocks away by civilian measure. But Captain Stone, though sorely tempted, ordered us to hold fire. He was still worrying about traps and machine-gun nests. So we sat on the trails and watched the juiciest target of the war make a clean getaway. Those boys would have been pie for us, and they knew it! They were beating their horses like hell and breaking all records for the St. Mihiel–Berlin cup classic.

The doughboys decided to dig in and call it a day. We turned back to Essey and took position beside the 1st Battalion, which pulled up a little later. Horse lines were established on a river bank near by, and the thirsty nags went completely cuckoo. At intervals all night long they broke loose from the picket line and went in swimming without their clothes on. It was a deep river, and we had to go after them with ropes and pull them out. Ten minutes later they were back again, giggling. Nobody got any sleep that night.

The divisional record carries this report for the day:

> . . . The morale of Battery F was exceptional. The entire battery volunteered to go on this mission; and in spite of fatigue caused by continuous work in extracting the carriages from shell holes, and the absence of food, the spirits of the men were very high.

Illustrating the weakness of words. If the spirits of the men didn't excel any previous enthusiasm of the war we'll eat that report.

In the morning the kitchen had not yet arrived, and we were as hungry as wolves. All our reserve rations were gone. The rule was that they couldn't be eaten without the captain's permission but that was like a lot of other rules. Captain Stone reminded us that we wouldn't be hungry now if we had obeyed orders, but that was just his way, too. He had eaten his and was suspected of having stolen Addie Moore's besides.

We prowled around and found some sugar beets. They were stringy and bitter and about as edible as pine shavings. Finally somebody thought of examining the German dead. Sure enough, in every pack was a little bundle of rations—salmon, hardtack, and sugar. Those boys were soldiers. You wouldn't catch *them* breaking ration rules. And look what it got them.

Considerably sustained we hooked up with the doughboys again and took position in a field outside of La Marche. The snacks we had pinched from the Germans wore out; by noon we were dizzy again—and there were no more Heinie rations. The doughboys had got next to that little stunt and were taking first picks.

Our hunger was at its height when we were aroused by a gentle moo. It was a familiar sound, and we racked our brains to place it. Seemingly it came from a wood just ahead of the guns. We crept forward, automatics drawn, prepared for any dirty work. Another moo.

"God in the Mountain, it's a cow!" shouted Nick Coss. Nick was a farmer lad and knew all about barnyard conditions. He was as correct as hell in this instance. Out walked a big mooley cow, and tried to make friends. That cow might as easily have tried to make friends with a Chicago beef baron. With many an anxious "So, Bossie! Here, Bossie!" we lured her out of the wildwood, roped her, and abandoned all pretense of affection. It was just a question of who was going to kill her and how.

Wild Bill Sloan claimed some knowledge of the slaughtering art and got the job. Bossie was blindfolded, and Bill took good aim with an axe. Captain Stone wiggled out of his pup tent and wanted to know what the hell we were doing. It is thought that he wanted milk in his coffee, as he kicked up a big stink and forbade the marriage. Respectfully, we pointed out that Bossie had stopped a machine gun bullet in the leg, making it sheer mercy to put her out of the way. The captain reluctantly consented.

Bill hit her a terrible sock on the skull. Bossie groaned in disillusionment and pain. Ike Sutton leaped like a panther and cut her throat. We strung her from a tree, and before she had quit kicking the boys had her liver on the fire.

The notion of liver after years of corn willie was ravishing. We tried to remember what liver tasted like as we turned Bossie's tasty organ over a pile of burning T. N. T. We could hardly wait for it to brown. At last it was done, and it was discovered that we had anticipated Bossie's death from liver trouble by ten split seconds. Her liver was awful. Even John Stovich couldn't go it.

To make matters worse, the Greek divided Bossie's carcass with a view of getting some choice steaks for himself—and carelessly forgot to skin her. Great chunks of fur kept bubbling up in the stew, and the meat was as tough as rubber. The gravy wasn't bad. At least it kept body and soul together for a couple of days longer.

What with Bossie and a chance to sleep eight hours, we were quite happy at La Marche until some German hoodlum began taking pot-shots at us from the woods a hundred yards away. And he wasn't shooting any machine gun. He had a great big 77.

Now, the woods were surrounded, and that German gun was by rights American property. Nobody is supposed to go shooting at people from behind their own lines, and yet every three or four minutes there was that short lethal hiss and another baby volcano in front of the guns. When people do things like that war isn't safe.

We formed posses and made a break for the woods. Immediately Baby laid off. But the moment we returned he was at it again. Ah! Some little pal of his was up a tree tipping him off, probably. We would settle *his* hash. The machine gunners trained on the woods and went over every leaf. The shells kept burning into the gun pits. The battery commander's detail tried to locate the trouble by trigonometry and the science of sound and reported what we already knew—that Baby was shooting from the woods.

We rushed back en masse and finally found the gun. The German had beat it, being a wise guy. Yet his continued presence in the sector was a bit worrisome. A man like that will do anything.

Some newspaper correspondents dashed up to the position, and we got a little credit—finally. So far we had been winning the war in a whisper. One of the newspaper men represented the Chicago *Tribune,* and he gave us all the news from home: who was getting elected, how the Chicago Beautiful plan was working out, how the city rang with our heroism, and many other pleasant items. He even parted with cigarettes. We had been rolling grass for a week.

It was here, too, that the Ancient and Honourable Society of Algerians was formed. This derived from the frequent recitation by one of the boys of a quaint rhyme concerning the Bey of that country and his curious pleasures.

For no reason the elocutionist became the Bey of Algiers, and a select 50 per cent. of the battery became his subjects. The boys ate it up, and there was much bitterness and muttering among those who had been left out. (The Bey was too foxy to include everybody.) Roger Baker, a high-pressure organizer, became Caliph, or second to the Bey. We weren't quite sure whether a Bey rated a Caliph or not, which eventually caused a serious revolution. But at first it worked as smoothly as any lodge, and the ceremonies were quite as elaborate. It's a cinch that the Bey got more respect than the officers.

For instance, no one in the order might address him without making a profound salaam and prefixing the words: "Oh, Worshipful, Most Glorious Bey!" to the simplest request. As in the American army, the Bey was obliged to recognize this obeisance with a grave and dignified inclination of his head.

For several days the officers beheld these ceremonies with childlike wonder, but they never got anywhere with their questions. It was Death to reveal the secrets of the Order.

All members of the Society were known as Mussulmans. Promotions were determined by sheer merit —not like in the army. In consequence the titles were greatly coveted. If a Mussulman did something superb (like telling a lieutenant where to head in) the Grand Council met immediately, and he was elevated to the dignity of Dervish with due ceremony. A Dervish had great authority and was responsible only to the Bey—at first. So much insubordination resulted, however, that His Worship ordained a couple of Viziers to keep order; and instituted a programme of iron discipline that would have made Pershing's knees knock together if he had heard about it.

From time to time those of the battery who had been craftily omitted from membership were admitted to the order on probation, after performance of sundry small services for the High Council (such as bringing their dinners from the kitchen and standing guard in their stead). Before very long all authority that the captain might have hoped to wield was vested in the Bey. His word was supreme. Furthermore, there was none of the laxity in saluting that so distressed the captain. When a Mussulman met the Bey he bowd low and professed to be awed by the Glory of His Presence, or like a shot he got bounced to the status of Mussulman, 2d Class.

There is no accounting for the deadly seriousness with which the Mussulmans did their stuff, unless it was because there was nothing else to do. Again, the Order was a glamorous affair and became increasingly so.

Life was not entirely one sweet song for the Bey, however, since it was the privilege of the lowest Mussulman to entreat him at all times; and most of them felt impelled to postpone their questions until the Bey was asleep. As soon as sore labour's bath set in eight Mussulmans would yank him by the collar, cringe, and say: "Is it true, O Glorious, Whose Face is Like Unto the Sun, that the Bey was asleep before his unworthy subjects woke him up?"

Speaking for the writer, it was carrying the joke a little too far.

The Order had hardly been formed and a flop trench set apart for the High Council when we got hurry-up orders to take over another section of the front, back of St. Benoît. Once more we squawked our hearts out—and once more we did what we were told.

CHAPTER VIII

IT WAS a mistake to win the battle of St. Mihiel. All it got us was a piece in the papers, three or four bum towns, and several thousand acres of marshy woods, worth five dollars an acre at the most. However, General Pershing got the idea that this duck pond was important and ought to be defended. Orders shortly came down to consolidate. Consolidate means dig. Dig means work.

A brand-new trench system was ordered. We scooped it out. Roads were needed. We made them. Gunpits and abris were necessary. We dug, and dug some more. Our officers sought to speed work by pretending the Germans were sore about getting kicked out and intended coming right back with their gang. Apple sauce.

Those Dutchmen knew when they were well off. They knew those woods, too. We couldn't have coaxed them back if we had opened a beer garden and admitted ladies free. So we dug away and remembered how happy we had been before the battle started.

Meanwhile rumours spread that the Rainbow was stuck in the bog for the winter. The men blew up, for a lot of good, honest-to-God reasons. There was talk of fighting in the North, and the toughest aggregation of star-spangled bums in the A. E. F. was spading up a lousy front that could have been held by any good football team—all because we had been suckers enough to take St. Mihiel in the first place.

Stories that Pershing had it in for us because we had shown up his pet regular army divisions were renewed. Well, if there was anything in precedent, the minute anything happened to those little Rollos, we would be on our way to the fire again—*toots sweet.*

Awaiting the call—it came sooner than we expected—we prepared to make ourselves comfortable. Our woods stood several miles back of the original front line, in the enemy S. O. S.

Evidently the Heinies had been using it for a turnverein. With real home-loving instinct, they had built a flock of rustic tables and benches, suitable for small dinners, etc. If we wanted to get strong there were any number of horizontal bars about, and a trapeze or two. Also the woods were dotted with bungalows, where the officers ran to tell each other secrets and play house.

Scouts beat the captain to several of these shanties and returned with everything that made life worth while. We acquired a piano; several stoves; a few Bavarian pipes in fair condition; a collection of superb steins, a file of funny papers, and a stack of rude photographs. Art subjects.

Even an accordion was discovered, and George Savage learned to manipulate it beautifully between hands of Three Card Monte. Stores of lumber, tar paper, and tin roofing led up to little homes with shelves in them. Imagine shelves! After working hours we lived like millionaires.

Moreover, we ate like millionaires for a couple of weeks, due to the cunning of Porch Climber MacMillan, who discovered an officers' ration dump down the road. Every morning he hitched up the supply wagon and drove it boldly to the dump.

Assisted by other blithe spirits, he picked out the choicest delicacies and—bellyaching loudly at the injustice of carrying officers' dainties on a diet of privates' slum—piled them into the wagon. Every night we dined on canned peaches, beans, corned-beef hash, and real coffee—in order. Every night, until success turned his head and made him attempt the impossible.

In brief, he sought to remove the entire dump to our diggings; but our hardy trio made the fatal blunder of carrying two boxes at once. At this show of zeal the officer in charge of the dump dropped dead. He had hitherto been forced to yell his heart out before six privates would carry one box. The three were immediately arrested, and there was big talk of shooting them. We went back to monkey meat and goldfish.

The Y. M. C. A. arrived and converted one of the

German log barracks into a get-together hut. That was a novelty for us; and when word went out that chocolate, cookies, cigarettes, and writing paper would be passed out on the opening night there was a panic.

The doors were opened finally, and everybody not on guard fought and bit and kicked to get in. The men at the guns were represented by delegates, which was a bit optimistic on their part. The prospect of chocolate—free—was far and away the high moment of the war to date.

But instead of stacks of chocolate a benevolent secretary stood on the platform, waving his handkerchief and beaming benignly. He announced right off the bat that he was happy to see us and now wished to recite a little poem by Robert W. Service. With no further warning he cleared his throat and commenced.

The poem had to do with a soldier who was very depressed about something and about to commit suicide. The secretary acted it out with much shadow boxing and hands to the heart and brow. His voice sank to a hoarse whisper and rose triumphantly as the soldier decided not to die, after all, but to stick it out for the sake of the Little Woman and the Fifty-second Congress.

On reaching the moral Mr. Secretary stepped heavily on the gas and choked up. He began to weep.

"Where's that chocolate?" bawled the loudest

voice in the outfit. It began to look as if the chocolate had been a ruse. There was talk of eating the secretary. *He* looked sweet.

Lieutenant Colonel A. V. Smith, who had been sobbing quietly in a corner, leaped to the platform and averted a pogrom. The muttering died down. We were very fond of Smith. Yet he was no diplomat. Blind to the pulsing issue, he went on from where the secretary had left off. For no reason he announced that we were not so badly off in comparison to the suffering of Washington at Valley Forge. As if anybody gave a damn about Washington and Valley Forge. Or Lincoln. Or William Jennings Bryan.

"Where's that chocolate?" insisted Mr. McGraw and glee club.

The Lieutenant Colonel begged to be heard. Washington was a fine fellow, he said, and a real credit to America. The demands for chocolate became deafening. Again Smith raised his hand. A sinister silence fell. If the Y. M. C. A. had been using chocolate as a bait for the Better Things of Life some wise secretary was going to be hamburger.

"Comrades!" cried the Lieutenant Colonel. "And I am *proud* to call you comrades!"

This was an alarming statement. He might just as well have confessed that there wasn't a bar of chocolate within fifty miles. An ugly murmur ran through the room, rising in ominous crescendo. The French revolution began just like that. (Cf. Carlisle.)

In the nick of time Lieutenant Colonel Smith grasped the situation. He was a lawyer and knew his stuff. He yelled suddenly that there was chocolate for all. Moreover, if anybody wanted to write home for forbidden boxes he personally would sign all requests. Thirdly, as he had mentioned before, he was *proud* to call us comrades.

The resultant cheer revealed the fickleness of human nature. It was immediately decided that Smith was the greatest officer in the army and should be a general, by rights. We unbelted with a few good opinions of the Y. M. C. A. as well.

Hitherto the initials had been interpreted as meaning "You Must Come Across," on account of excessive prices asked by the secretaries for their wares. Now it was a good institution. The chocolate was distributed. A grave crisis of the war was averted.

This episode almost reconciled us to the tedium of digging; especially as a hot rumour indicated that we were destined for another front more worthy of our talents. We prepared for the move by trading our skinny, drooping nags for some fat and frisky ponies belonging to a French battery down the road. Those French were a little careless about the way they guarded their picket lines, although the boys who made the swap could have stolen their Frog eyes if we had wanted them.

Quite a scene took place the next day when the Frogs called and tried to get their horses back. We were amazed at their claims and patiently pointed out —by certain markings—that our new horses were genuine American mustangs, fresh from the Woolly West. When they remained unconvinced we tweaked a couple of moustaches and asked them if they wanted to make anything out of it. Nobody could call *us* liars and get away with it.

There was no new front in stock, so the general thought up something just as good. He decided it would be a slick idea if the battery sneaked out into No Man's Land and fired a few shots at point-blank ranges. It certainly was an original idea. People have been put in the Nut House for less.

It is barely possible that men, women, and children not connected with Battery F, 149th Field Artillery, may glance over this record some day. For their benefit, a slight description of the general's plans with comment on same:

It was proposed by the general and seconded by his sycophantic admirers that the battery should leave its safe little woods on the night of September 21st and mosey up to the front-line trenches, crossing them as if they were roller-skating rinks; after which we were to line up the guns—at a neat dress—in No Man's Land and shoot such Germans as we saw fit. The theory was that such unprecedented procedure would scare the wits out of the enemy and teach them not to start any more wars.

From our point of view there were several slight objections to the scheme: (*a*) We might get killed. (*b*) Very likely, we *would* get killed. (*c*) We couldn't escape getting killed. And for no reason. We could hit whatever targets the general had in mind just as hard and twice as accurately from our regular positions.

Moreover, the general's plan assumed that the Germans were going to sit still while we sent several hundred shells into their little stomachs from a distance of a few hundred feet. We knew better. At that time the Germans had good machine guns, elegant cannon, and no sense of humour. It was fairly certain that they would put up with our tomfoolery for just so long and then get good and mad. They might even shoot back.

When the order came down, therefore, it looked as if the general had invented a contest for the goofiest idea of the war—and then had set out to win it himself. However——

> *Theirs not to make reply*
> *Theirs not to reason why,*
> *Theirs but to do and die;*
> —PERSHING.

Another call for volunteers. Another touching rush to be killed. Captain Stone mournfully picked out a platoon. The woods shuddered with drama, and private opinions of all generals caused the sweet green leaves to curl up and die. Such handshaking as went on between the select few and their potential survivors! A thousand expressions of good luck fell flat in the mud. The little Greek said a prayer.

The practical side of the matter received some attention. Axles were thoroughly greased to take out the squeak. The clank of the harness was deadened with rags. The guns sneaked out at set of sun. Why the general gave us the break of doing our stuff in the dark is a mystery. The Germans would have had much better pickings by daylight.

The parade crept through the inky woods, the men cursing in whispers when a horse snorted or a stick broke under the wheels. We reached the front line, indistinguishable from any other part of the line in the darkness, except for the click of a bayonet and an occasional doughboy humming a song.

Captain Stone and Fred Somant rode ahead and flitted back and forth with whispered directions. A steel wagon tire rang against a rock. Wild echoes woke the silent valley. Oh, oh! That was bum coffee. No back talk from the Krauts, however. So far we were playing in elegant luck. But one star shell would have caused some handsome hash.

Midway in No Man's Land lay a little hollow. The horses were led—very gently—over the rim. We unlimbered in five seconds flat and turned the guns toward Germany. Our target was Merin-Bois Farm, supposedly impregnable. The brick farm buildings loomed in the dark blue night like Gibraltar.

Caissons were silently unloaded, shells piled in rows. Each accidental clash of iron on iron brought a hiss of hard-boiled reproach. The horses were led to a patch of pine back of the first line. The cannoneers dug their flops—shovels burning. No digging ever was done so fast or so well.

Captain Stone crept over the rise of ground to direct fire. At once a fool full moon shot from a cloud on a bob-sled. The farm lighted up like a Christmas tree. Three quick ranges came down, then:

"Fire!"

A murderous salvo, instantly repeated as the shells ripped into the building and tore it apart. We were loading on the recoil now. Dotted lines of death streamed from every gun to the farm. There were so many explosions that our target was obscured by smoke.

The Germans ran around like monkeys in a ninety-mile blizzard. A dozen rockets hissed out of their little hell, breaking red and white and green over our heads. That meant a few return packages at any minute. We got ready to duck. Several machine guns began to rattle; our nerves were spared by all the noise we ourselves were making. Only when snip-snips filled the cracks of sound were we conscious of possibilities.

Wham! We were faded! Big guns, too. The Katzenjammer Kids didn't know where we were yet.

The closest shells were a hundred feet away. It's pretty tough, firing at flashes.

Bong! That one clipped the crest. Getting warmer, Germans. Some nosey *Oberleutnant* was giving them the right address. Big buckets of high explosive hammered the hollow. Some of them were bad news. We took to firing from our hands and knees as fragments whirred like pigeons past our ears.

Two or three honeys landed twenty feet from the second piece. We got on our faces, popping up like jacks-in-the-box at every battery right. A fragment sliced Wilbur Wood in the arm. He kept on serving the gun.

The Germans got real rough, slinging iron like confetti. Result: They began to have the same trouble we were having—they couldn't see us for shell bursts.

We laid off for a second and got a new line on the farm, passing the salt and pepper every time our Dutch cousins stuck their snoots out of the wreckage. Meanwhile a smudge of dawn streaked the sky. We began to get nervous. This sort of thing couldn't go on forever.

Nevertheless, through many tough campaigns one natural law had revealed itself: *If* we got through the first fifteen minutes of fire without serious damage we were reasonably safe from harm thereafter. This law had operated beautifully for seven months. On the strength of its continued operation some of the boys got frisky. Walter Birkland, in particular, ran around the second gun during a regular cyclone of shell fragments. It was for luck, he explained.

Night began to fade—perceptibly. So did our ammunition. Between shots we discussed what we would do by the dawn's early light—when all those fun-loving Katzenjammers got a look at us. Someone suggested that we pretend we were waxworks. The rest thought of apologizing and clung to those who had studied German in college.

Worry vanished with the sudden appearance of the drivers, racing through the smoke drifts. Three cheers for the Red, White, and Blue! Hooray for Lloyd George! Bravo, Clemenceau! By some process of nerves the guns were hooked to the limbers. We tore across the field, one side or a leg off. Considerable scrap iron pounded in our tracks. A good mile back of the first line we stopped running, feeling that we were still ten miles too near.

So there *was* a God.

A terrific reunion took place at the old position. Those who had been left behind were thoroughly Ritzed by the death dodgers. The stunt was discussed from every angle. Among other things we took it all back about the general. Shooting from No Man's Land was an elegant idea. The general was a genius. He knew his oats, that boy; and he knew whom to pick for the tough jobs, too.

A little later the expedition was warmly commended through the colonel. Our opinions of the general went up another eight notches. There was a man who would amount to something in the war.

The captain did the handsome thing and cited all who took part in the mission for their conduct under fire. We reminded the captain that he had been very brave, too. It was all like Christmas in the Harem.

Further, the Intelligence Department reported that our fire had completely demolished the enemy positions, annihilating the defenders. A few of them, deprived of the Y. M. C. A.'s heartening counsel, had committed suicide. On the other hand we were intact and apparently immune. No German could hurt us from now on. Several of the boys attempted to cut out their army insurance. Obviously there was no sense in shelling out ten dollars every month when the war was all a big joke.

Then came the discovery of General Pershing that his best troops were playing kiss-the-pillow in the woods of Essey. This was three weeks after the battle of St. Mihiel. Immediately orders came thick and fast. It was rumoured that we were scheduled to crack the line north of Verdun. That was O. K. with us. There was glamour about Verdun, already the graveyard of a million brave men.

We rolled out of our beer garden on the double. The doughboys flashed past in motor trucks, yelling, "See you later!" They were sitting pretty, riding from front to front like bank presidents, while we hiked on swollen feet.

The regiment became separated, due to some brainy work on the part of a major and a lieutenant. The latter's idea of being a great officer was to threaten stragglers with death, on the theory that any officer could shoot an enlisted man whenever he felt like it. And get a bounty from Congress, to boot.

"That's what *I* call army diss-*sip*-lin!" he would bawl, in support of his permit to kill. Of course, we never took the threat seriously. In spite of army regulations, there must be a law somewhere against shooting people.

All the way we were bothered by various pests, chiefly Marine M. P.'s. One general, who thought he was a tough guy, amused himself by dressing up in a private's slicker and hammering our buzzing eardrums with:

"What *out*-fit, buddy?"

You can't fool a horse fly. *We* knew he was a general. The answers came back like rubber bands:

"Buffalo Bill, you big sap!"

"Nine Hunert and Eighty-eighth Dental Supply, Dismounted. Remounted on Horseback."

"Hunert and One Ranch! Y. M. C. A. Replacements! What's it *to* you?" etc.

The general met this razz with words that are never used by generals or gentlemen. We threatened to wash his mouth out with soap and water. In a fine blaze of fury he ripped off the slicker and stood revealed in all his silver stars. Now that he could prove he was a general it was no fair insulting him. We shut up.

After twenty long hours—boots, boots, boots, going up and down again, and occasional opportunities to trade places with the drivers—we hit a collection of wooden barracks and paused for the afternoon. A sack of potatoes was immediately switched from a National Army ration dump, and someone promoted a gallon of bacon grease. We ate French fried potatoes and the last of our reserve rations.

Captain Stone went completely military and ordered us to wash the carriages and guns, which did away with any foolish notions of sleep. Work was interrupted several times by his loud snores. At night we hit the trail again, tired and sore as hell; shooting tobacco juice at the officers as they snooped up and down the column in the hope of catching somebody hanging onto a carriage for support.

Morning brought us to the dust piles around Verdun. Once they were towns. We swung into the wide white road called the Holy Way in remembrance of the thousands upon thousands of dead men who had tramped over the hill and on out of the world. Countless corpses. In the first cemetery were twenty thousand tidy graves. The French are a neat people. Thirty thousand lay in the next. In all we passed more than twenty graveyards. Well, there were still more than 1,500,000,000 people in the world with approximately the same dreams and jobs and jokes.

We steamed up a long hill. Those monotonous crosses stuck out of the slope like cloves from a ham. The hill was as burned and barren-looking. We halted at the summit in what passed as a woods. Barracks here, and mail. We hung out a "Not to be Disturbed" sign for an hour and didn't start the crap game until late in the afternoon. Some diversion was furnished by a green division, hot from the States. They twitted us for fellow newcomers, because we had neglected to sew on our service stripes. Shiners were hung on a couple of them.

The little Greek thought he saw a woman and burned down the road with a set of tempting chops. His quarry turned out to be a priest. Mr. Papolis returned, a bitter Scotch Presbyterian.

Sunset and evening star; and one clear call for us. We dragged our badly swollen dogs down the hill and hit it out for the war.

A long and horrible hike on bleeding feet. Avocourt at last. This was a pile of dirty flourlike dust at a crossroads. A broken milestone was the one remainder of the town. In the early morning light it began to look as if we were just poking our noses into a lot of trouble. We proceeded to the bloody Bois de Montfaucon and had a chair.

So this was the Argonne! A bunch of doughboys snored on the ground. They informed us that the American army had suffered overwhelming defeat; that the Allies were trapped; that the Germans were making sandwiches out of one and all. This was staggering news until we learned that the rumours had their origin in the plight of the now famous Lost Battalion, cut off directly ahead. We were there to help get them out.

The sun appeared, and we gave our new surroundings the once-over. It was hardly a garden of roses. The woods were splintered into small bits, green with mustard gas. There wasn't a live leaf in twenty miles. Thousands of dead men sprawled in the ulcerated fields. Horses, their legs awkwardly pointing up, and a general litter of junk. Wagons, rifles, socks, rations, love letters. What bum soldiers those boys must have been, God rest their pretty souls! Everything pointed to panic and massacre.

One of the kids lay on the ground dying with a bullet in his guts. He had been yanked from a stenographer's job in New York, trained (as they say), and exposed to his first fire—all in thirty-seven days. He was slightly bewildered by it all.

The doughboys told of being marched in a column of fours right down to the trenches in full sight of the German gunners. More Sears-Roebuck officers. One gang of artillerymen told us of firing for thirty-six hours without effect. It turned out that they hadn't used fuses. Apparently their officers thought shells went off by themselves and had been pegging iron cucumbers through the entire battle. It became clear why we had run all the way from St. Mihiel.

One of the boys expressed the general sentiment when he gazed on the piles of gaping dead, scratched his nose, and remarked:

"Something tells me we ain't going to be happy here."

CHAPTER IX

INTO the Valley of Death charged Battery F, 149th Field Artillery, blond, American, salary $30 a month. The Argonne was a boiler factory. Shells screamed in and out and up and down. Hardly the place for nervous people.

In a red-hot blizzard we cut across lots and took position in a field near Nantillois—an elegant manœuvre, executed in broad daylight, right under the enemy guns.

The Katzenjammer Kids saw us coming and made it very, very hard for everybody. The mushy fields bubbled like a bowl of porridge as big shells, little shells, and medium-sized shells kissed the mud and whistled through our whiskers. We could see right off that the Argonne wasn't going to be any fun at all.

Some of the shells came from captured French 75's, which seemed a little unfair. We spoke of having the Germans arrested for stealing. Moreover, they were tossing a brand-new kind of shell that bounced three times before exploding, like a skipping stone. Several of the boys were knocked cold cracking their chins against the ground at every bounce.

Somehow the guns were lined up. Immediately we flattened out and dug with teeth, fingers, and toes. It wasn't safe to wiggle your ears. One brother did, stopped one in the arm and then had to play squat tag all the way back to the first-aid station to avoid getting eight more in the neck. He got no help from us. We were too busy digging—next stop China.

The silver lining to this dark cloud was that the field was pocked with large shell craters, convertible to fairly safe flops in which only a direct hit could kill. And nobody ever worried about direct hits. They were too complete.

Captain Stone finished his firing data. We shed our blouses and settled down to wilful, premeditated murder. The Germans came back with new Niagaras of high explosives. Apparently somebody told them that if they hit us they would get a round of cigars and dolls for the ladies. Under the rain of iron the second gun crew began to sing "Brighten the Corner Where You Are," with appropriate interpolations.

We had a new lieutenant. We got him at Château-Thierry—like the nose-bleed. He was a sensitive man, and when all the popcorn began to come in he developed galloping symptoms of St. Vitus's dance. A stray shell parted his hair as he dove into an honest private's flop trench, and on discovering that he was still in one piece he remembered he had sprained his ankle on the hike from Montfaucon and began to groan loudly. Nobody paid any attention. He spoke as follows:

"Could a couple of you fellows give me a lift over to the first-aid station?"

Well, there was nothing to do about that, shooting officers being frowned on at the time.

In the midst of serving his gun a cannoneer remarked mildly; "Mamma has only one pair of hands, Lieutenant." Mr. Lieutenant took the hint and hobbled painfully off, performing bewildering cartwheels, double somersaults, and sit-falls as the shells hammered at his heels. We held up the war long enough to send up a barrage of boos, which were resumed when he was handed back to us at Brest some months later. What a boat ride that young man had.

The cannoneers weren't the only heroes of Nantillois. Hell was popping along the roads, and the drivers were living from minute to minute in their saddles. The parade was in charge of Corporal Bill Youngman, who had an uncanny instinct for outguessing the German guns. Time and again he turned the column at a gallop just as a flock of heavies slapped the road ahead. Bill was an ardent American and loved his job. Day and night he carried four automatics, three trench knives, a couple of Chauchats and a peck of hand grenades, in the hope of some day meeting the Prussian Guard. We called him the Foreign Legion.

For three days and three nights we sweated and swore and dodged and dug and loaded and fired until the hoodlums on the other end of the argument decided to take a run for powder. As always, we hitched and followed after, pulling up in a windy plain near Cierges, a badly chewed ten acres, stinking with destruction. We were winning, yet the war seemed to be going from bad to worse. Again we dug. Again we fired. And fired and dug and fired. No food. No sleep. No fun. Many were the hearts looking for the right, wishing for the war to cease. Home never seemed so far away and so long ago.

Contrary to the happy proverb, the darkest hour usually is before a catastrophe. The night we landed at Cierges the wind died down and the guns had to be relaid. Walter Birkland volunteered to lay the second gun—a job for two men; but Walter didn't want to wake anybody up. And a shell got him, of course.

He keeled over the trail and very quietly said he was hit. We had a weakness for Walter. There was an instant cross-country run for the first-aid station. A half-dressed doctor was dragged to the guns. In the time that it took him to get there Walter had figured out his chances and arrived at conclusions.

He grinned and said: "Don't kid me, Doc. It's curtains."

The doctor hesitated. He wasn't a bad egg and hated to break the news. Finally he said: "Yes, my boy. You're dying."

Walter thought it over.

"Well," he said, "I'm not afraid. Nobody's ever done my work." (In war, the life of every man is so dependent on the hard work of everybody else.) We tried to carry him back to the first-aid station. He wouldn't let us.

"It won't do any good," he said, "and you're bushed as it is. Just help me back in the field a way. I'll be all right."

We carried him back of the guns and laid him down. The pain was unbearable. The doctor did his best with injections. They didn't work. Walter lay and sweated it out. Once he asked us to hurry it up. When we wouldn't he dictated a message to his parents, then asked to be alone.

A barrage was ordered. We sent it over, looking back between shots at the blanket in the moonlight. Now and then one of the boys went away and came back. In an hour he signalled that it was over. We worked the guns as fast as they would shoot and hoped hard that we were killing.

Walter's death shot our morale to pieces. He was such a swell guy. The next morning we got the supply wagon up and took him back to the echelon for a decent funeral. We made a coffin out of some ammunition boxes and dug him a grave. When the earth went in the little Greek began to bawl and opened the box to add a can of corned willie and a pinch of coffee. The gesture was so frantic and sincere, we forgave him all his trespasses on the spot. Walter's name was hammered on a mess-kit top and nailed to a cross. A second time we left him, and pushed on to Fléville in pursuit of the Flying Dutchmen.

Thank God our own infantry finally were ahead of us. That was more like it. Whatever was in the cards from now on could go under the head of Unavoidable Hard Luck.

Positions were picked in a flat valley along the Aire, a deep and narrow river choked with French, American, and miscellaneous dead. Willow trees trailed their pretty fingers in the black rush of water. Here and there a body clung to the branches. Over the river a thousand yawning dead—a great pity, everything considered. Yet there, but for the grace of God, would lie all of us. The grace of God and New York's rusty bayonets, dead ahead.

Those New York babies went right to work. Before we had a chance to dig in they were tearing through Saint-Georges, just over the hill. They asked for a barrage, and we threw them a honey—up 25 and up 25 and run, you lousy Germans! It was like old times. We began to feel sorry for the poor Krauts. They shouldn't have to run like that on top of a heavy breakfast. It's bad for the stomach. Well, they were finally getting a rough idea of what war was like. A lot of them would be ready to quit the army and take in washing before long.

Ranges went up and up. We spun the dials an extra fifty metres to catch the colonels, generals, and society leaders, who naturally would have a head start. At the limit of our range we ceased fire. Number One men swabbed out the steaming bores and remarked that if President Wilson wanted us to beat up any more Dutch Athletes he would have to send us some hairbrushes. When all of a sudden——

Captain Stone burned out of the telephone central blowing his tin whistle.

"Seventeen degrees and ten minutes! Snap into it!"

We stood for a second, unable to believe our ears. The last elevation had been nearly eight thousand metres. And there was the skipper bawling a range that meant the Germans were a couple of city blocks away. Obviously he had gone completely nuts. We had seen it coming for a long while.

"*Fire!* You so-and-so's!" The captain was jumping up and down like a monkey on a stick. "Colonel Reilly says the doughboys are in desperate need of our help!"

There were just ten shells in each gun pit. Half of them went bye-bye in the first frenzied minute. The range decreased in alarming kangaroo jumps. Only five shells to go. We slung them over, praying that the Germans would die of sunstroke or that God would do something about the ordnance department. He did.

Around the hill in back of the guns, on cue, rattled the first section caisson, hauled by six of the lousiest slobs in the animal kingdom. A more discouraged, seedier set of horses never lived, full of pneumonia germs and black thoughts toward the war, the world, and all mankind. As they plodded around the bend a Comanche yell went up from the firing battery. The last shell was gone, the ranges were coming down, down. In another ten minutes the Germans would be in our laps.

The drivers somehow got the idea. Standing in their stirrups they began banging their teams' bony bustles with steel helmets. Ten minutes before the horses would have laughed heartily at such treatment. Chances are that they would have sat down in their traces and made faces at the corporals. Now they seemed to get the idea, too. While four decreasing ranges were rattled off with no back talk from us, they reared in their harness, shook their heads a couple of times, and began to pound across the field—hoofs flying, mouths open and dripping suds. And they were such bags of bones, any respectable merry-go-round would have turned them down.

The second caisson made the turn banked on two wheels. The third, the fourth appeared; the drivers hanging over their horses' necks, whispering words of love while they socked hard at skinny rumps. The first section reached the guns. The cannoneers broke the caisson and unloaded on the run. Shells were fused and fired in a beautifully controlled frenzy.

The second caisson galloped up. A bucket brigade formed, and shells were thrown to gunners like basket balls. Miraculously, ranges took a jump. It was time. We were firing at spitting distance, nearly. The last shell went just as the third caisson came up. We jammed the new ammunition into hot bores without waiting to grease. Up twenty-five. Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow! Up fifty. Who said them Dutch heads could fight? Up a hundred! Get with 'em, New York! Run them bow-legged! A hundred more. Cut a Rainbow in their pants. Another hundred. The war's over.

The trembling, bow-legged horses sagged away. We slammed some more iron at increasing ranges. At last seven thousand, with the guns sweating paint and burning up the air. Cease fire—this time, no kidding.

It was a great day for the doughboys. They had been surprised in front of their objective by forces ten times their strength and spent a hot hour stabbing, and getting stabbed, and winning washtubs full of crosses and Medals of Honour.

Such little parties, as the colonel called them, weren't funny any more, especially for the doughboys. All of them had been sleeping in the rain for weeks, a single soaking blanket between them and the cold October slop. They were less than 60 per cent. effective on the morning of Saint-Georges: full of dysentery, pneumonia, and fight. When this was called to General Summerall's attention by Alabama's scrappy colonel His Nibs took another chew of tobacco and ordered the doughboys to take the town or come back 100 per cent. dead. General Hindenburg laid off the hand-to-hand stuff and began fooling around with airplanes and gas, besides the usual shelling. By day a searching, nerve-racking fire—and good-bye to all who didn't pull in their ears. Gas galore, drifting across the valley in ugly green wisps. One good sniff and *fini guerre.*

By night the bombs. German planes crawled over the dark sky unhindered, like lazy fat lice. Rattle of machine guns, bark of anti-aircraft went for nothing. On they crept, black against dark blue. Beneath them a flash and a roar, a flash and a roar. Nothing is so demoralizing, especially when one's flashes are the targets.

The more bombs they dropped the deeper we dug until our positions were strong as Verdun. Even though our guns stuck out like sore thumbs and the Germans sent handsome Christmas presents into the very pits, we remained safe and sound and extremely hard to kill. One of the men had a six-inch shell—about fifty pounds of high explosive—sail between his ankles as he slept. It was a dud, and he escaped with a sprained foot, a wise Providence intending that he should survive the war and become known as the greatest liar in America.

With each passing day the Heinies got meaner and meaner. Every time we bundled out to breakfast, they gave us everything they had—which was about ten shells apiece. Again and again the camouflage over the guns was torn to shreds. Several times direct hits landed smack in the ammunition, blowing it to hell and gone. Colonel Reilly (God bless him and make him president of the War College!) long ago had drilled it into us to keep fuses and shells separate, so these explosions were comparatively harmless. Another apple for Teacher: The uncomfortable tin hats he made us wear day and night saved many lives during this spell, which pretty well cleans up this colonel business.

You would think the Germans would get sick of picking on one battery—and you would have another think coming. Several times they got up on the wrong side of the bed and acted so rough that Captain Stone made us abandon the guns. His motives were the best, but it only made matters more difficult when a barrage was ordered and we had to shinny through shell bursts back to the pits.

On October 16th some mathematical giant on the German side got us figured out to the sixteenth of an inch, and a barrage of 77's nearly put us out of business. For a while shells literally were bouncing off the guns. The gun pits looked like sand forts after somebody had stepped on them.

We wiggled out of the flops and got the wounded to a first-aid station. One crank couldn't be handled until he was allowed to crawl back through the barrage and recover certain buttons from his best blouse.

He had been shining them ever since we left the States. He also made a scene over a package of needles and thread, missing from his blanket roll. For twenty minutes he stood among bursting shells, holding onto his torn ribs and yelling that somebody had stolen his needles. We told him to shut up. He wouldn't. He said that he knew who the thief was and that he was going to get a good sock on the smeller. It took three men to get him into the ambulance.

Lieutenant Somant, who had been wounded, had hardly reached the first-aid station before unbecoming guffaws arose from his gun section. The poor guy deserved more sympathy. But cause for rejoicing lay in the fact that, rummaging through his effects, Johnnie Foster had uncovered a regular pantry—at least ten cans of jam, several packages of cookies, candy, cigars, and a litter of chewing gum. It became painfully evident that our hero had been holding out on the Y. M. C. A. supplies, of which he was in charge. A bitter fight, nearly as disastrous as enemy shells, at once developed between the gun crews for possession of these dainties. The third gun crew held that the cache belonged to them by right of discovery, while the other crews demanded a pro-rata split. Thereafter Frenchy's regrettable injuries seemed slightly retributive. For five days we had been smoking grass with four full cartons of Camels in that burglar's musette bag.

Having scored on the battery the Germans went in for some good clean fun with a 42-centimetre gun, the kind we had always read about and had never seen—and never want to see again. Every afternoon all the Heinies who had been very good for the previous week were allowed to shoot it off. And every afternoon we prayed fervently that the Germans would fry in hell for their practical jokes.

From far away—thirty kilometres, at least—came a dull boom, as if a comet had struck the other side of the world. Next the growing rumble of an elevated train, rushing into a roar. Into the flops boys, and may God have mercy on your souls!

The prospect was no worse than a runaway engine bearing down on an orphan asylum; and yet, as the air split before the shrieking tons of iron, and the roar massaged our spines like a nutmeg grater, some instinct sent the shoulder blades together with a bang and the most dauntless heroes rolled up like armadillos. The first boiler full of death habitually took a final turn with a squeal that unbuttoned every vertebra on the front. A terrific crash; a great black whirl of earth and iron; a rain of clods and steel. Five hundred metres away the shock was sufficient to knock the guns out of alignment and throw the crews on their faces—if they hadn't been on their faces from the first. Every eardrum caved in from concussion. It was enough to make a fellow as nervous as a witch.

We never got used to the feeling. Just as we thought we were hardened to it along would come another aërial locomotive on the loose. Once more spines stretched like rubber bands. *Bang!* and a blob of black smoke. That was Fléville. Up went the First Baptist Church, ever so slowly, and chinned itself twice on nothing. Very impressively it descended, steeple first, a lesson to all good Presbyterians. Again, great trees ascended quietly, clods the size of beer barrels clinging to their roots. Once or twice they turned and floated back into their native woods.

Quite often hits were made a stone's throw from the position. We ducked like loons while an acre of land went up and rattled down on our curly heads. A dozen times a chunk of scrap iron weighing two hundred pounds crashed into the gun pits like a live bull.

"Well," said Rush Dyer, peeking from the bowels of the earth on one of these occasions, "that's the first time I knew them Germans used battleships for fragments."

There was a definite cadence to this monkey business, and a full five minutes after every shot in which to see the damage. Always a smoking crater twenty feet deep, forty feet across. Each new hole was a powerful argument for the Monroe Doctrine. Let Europe mind its own business and we'll mind ours. America for Americans. No Entangling Alliances, and three cheers for Washington.

One of our lieutenants (who shall be nameless because he tried to be human) heard one of these choo-choo trains coming while he was telling funny travelling men's stories and punishing a mess kit full of beans. In the middle of a big laugh the ugly crescendo began. Incidentally, the most interesting feature about a 42-centimetre shell is its intimately personal touch. With nine thousand people around you *know* it's for papa. The lieutenant's face slowly froze.

Automatically he began working backward, crab style, his eyes glaring at the invisible monster in the sky. We yelled that he was heading for the river, but he didn't hear or care. His face was so green, so sorry for everything he had done in this world, so uncertain God would forgive him in the next. Still holding his mess kit at alert he backed right into the Aire, disappearing in a cloud of bubbles and beans. We fished him out with a rammer staff, laughing like fools and keeping the pole away from him until he was half drowned. Before he got it he had to salute twelve times.

A battery of National Army artillery pulled into the field to our left. Immediately we were inspired to show the kids what real soldiers with whiskers could do. The next time the Fritzies shelled us we stood up in the pits and faded them, shot for shot. There was no reason for this show of heroism; every reason for abandoning position. Shells were raining in like confetti. Captain Stone was yelling to beat it for the river, especially as we were firing at barbed wire and any other time would do. But that damned National Army battery was looking.

For half an hour we kept the home fires burning. The Germans turned two batteries on us, and a hail of shells ripped through the camouflage and bounced off the wheels. It got so hot that we had to do belly flops and fire from the crouch. The National Army obliged with cheers, which endeared us to the draft at once. Those boys would be soldiers in time. Anybody could see that.

The tough part of being a hero is that you can't quit once you start. We were about to cease fire and run for it when Johnnie Foster had a rush of courage to the head and yelled: "Step right up, boys! Three shots for a nickel!" which induced another round of applause and committed us to the worst half hour of the war, proving that divisional pride has Love of Country skinned a mile.

Lieutenant Wegner, recovered from his wounds, duly rejoined the battery and decided to make the position God's Little Garden and the neatest little spot on the front. Every morning he wandered among the gunpits, declaring National Cleanup Week at each one. Old socks were to be burned; cigarette butts pulverized; blankets brushed; nasturtiums planted. The theory seemed to be that the Germans would peek through their field glasses and set us down as innocent suburbanites.

All this was woman's work, and we told the lieutenant so. We also told him to go away and not do that any more. At first we were very polite, and it wasn't until Lieutenant Wegner got cross and bad-tempered that we were in the least bit severe with him. Lieutenants are like children that way. They begin by talking back. The next thing you know they are out of hand and have to be sent to military school.

Rumours, rumours, rumours. The front was a coffee klatch. Every soldier in the division had his own hot tip. Two American aviators had captured the Kaiser and cut his ears off. Mr. Edison had invented a poison gas that would destroy every living thing within a radius of twenty miles. Hereafter we could fight the war with bean blowers. America had developed an amazing airplane from which it was possible to blow up Berlin—a useless procedure since Berlin had already been captured by the British.

Not all these pop-eyed rumours were as reassuring. For instance, the Kaiser was about to celebrate his birthday by destroying the entire American army with a new gas, better than Edison's. And so on and on. All rumours considered detrimental to morale were treated as treasonable, and there was big talk of shooting those who passed them out; which only gave them greater impetus.

Captain Stone held a soap-box session in back of the guns between afternoon and evening fire and gave us his personal low-down. He offered to bet 1,500 francs to 750 that the war would go through the winter. It was a great chance to clean up, as it turned out later, but the skipper had such a serious pan that we hesitated. And it would have been so pleasant to have him working for us from the Armistice on.

The front settled down to periodic pot shots and blood-letting while both sides gathered strength. A lady came up from the Salvation Army and opened a bakery under fire. Every day a committee rode over with a rammer staff and threaded two dozen doughnuts. We examined a former sauerkraut factory and found a tub suitable for bathing. All of us were lousy as goats, and the leaky wooden barrel looked like a Turkish bath. Even this simple pleasure was resented by the Germans, who blew the place off the map, scattering sauerkraut for miles. They were getting to be regular crabs.

So were we. We caught a Y. M. C. A. travelling man trading priceless chocolate to German prisoners for buttons and iron crosses. We hadn't had any chocolate since Somant bit the dust, so we knocked the secretary loose from his triangle and returned with his wares.

We also got mad at the aviators—on both sides. Every day and night the Germans would skim over and unload a flock of bombs. It was a bit unnerving to watch the black eggs leave the plane, grow bigger than piano boxes and blow our little valley into the conformations of the grand cañon of Arizona. Especially as the American planes seemed to do nothing about it. Every morning our bully boys sailed over the line, fifty at a time, saw the sights, and came back. Often we saw two German planes running four or five Americans ragged. At this distance of months we know that they were observation planes and were not supposed to fight. Then it seemed that five Americans were running from two Germans, and many a Chau-chat and borrowed rifle went into the Americans' wings—we hoped.

Try our best, we never brought an American down, so we got back at them with a parody on "Homeward Bound," as follows:

Often overhead, when you're gone to bed,
Fritzie comes flying right over the place,
His tail gate let down, and a smile on his face;
But when he turns his old steering wheel
Then you feel a joy that's real.

Because he's homeward bound
It's great to hear that fading sound
For while overhead he's humming
All the officers are running.
[*By way of getting ninety-five birds with one brick*]
And though the skies are black
He somehow sees your little shack

But when he drops his bombs and turns right around
And leaves big holes all over the ground,
He's homeward bound.
It's a wonderful, wonderful sound.

That cleans up the German end of the matter. Now for the dirty part:

Way back in the rear, where no guns they hear,
Our aviators tune up their planes,
Then they go out and flirt with the janes.
But when danger's hovering around
You bet your elbow they're never found.

Because they're homeward bound,
They're flying fast and near the ground.
And while the shot and shell are flying
For the S.O.S they're sighing.
It's good they get high pay

To buy champagne 'most every day.
[*There's a hot shot*]
But if you want to hear our aëro-planes sound
Don't come near when Fritzie's around.
Because they're homeward bound.
It's a hell of a, hell of a sound.

Aviators may retort that the composers of such lousy verse ought to be shot for their rotten rhymes, aside from the injustice involved. But the boys felt deeply at the time, and they were without complete information on metrical forms and the arts and sciences of aërial warfare. Besides, it is always the thought that counts.

After the Armistice we got to know several aviators, and they seemed like nice fellows. Most of us were very sorry we shot at them.

It was getting late in October. We read in such newspapers as occasionally came through that big military experts were enthusiastic over our sector as a valuable blood-letting proposition. As there were more Americans with much more blood on our side of the line, they felt the enemy would get sick of shooting in four or five years and pull out.

Meanwhile new divisions crept in under cover of night, big naval guns were hauled up, and soldiers were packed in every shell hole and valley, like sardines. The last great battle of the war was impending.

CHAPTER X

HERE it was October, a good month for oysters, football, forest fires, and everything but war; which, of course, was just getting good. General Summerall had shoved us up again, right in the gold teeth of the German army.

Just for fun we were parked on the back of a greasy little hill in front of Sommerance, difficult enough for little feet, let alone guns. In time they were placed and pointed at the foe, just as the foe started some rough-house stuff that nearly sent us to the cleaners'. Shells skimmed over the crest fifty at a time, followed by gas, shrapnel, and stray machine-gun bullets. The Heinies threw everything but their shoes. For a while nobody was safe.

A break, however; the ground was soft as Camembert. In ten shining minutes we were four feet under, guns and all. Thereafter we sat in the gluey mud and silently explored our bosoms for agile gray pests. Conversation had about died as a form of entertainment, especially as any repartee involved poking one's head out of the flop into a whining cyclone of steel splinters. We were too close for effective fire (there was some talk of throwing our shells by hand), and it was raining. And it was cold. And there had been no rations for five solid days.

Behind us were the reserve machine guns, adding to that unpleasant first-line-trench feeling; particularly when some snake-brained Yank accidentally leaned on his weapon and threw a bucket of bullets past our ears. Over the hill—if the lump of lard on which we were could have been called a hill—lay the doughboys and Germans; quite visible if one cared to look. By that time, however, Germans were no treat.

The front was lousy with men. Every wood and templed hill bulged with U. S. citizens, itching to bust loose. Our old pals the Marines came up and had a chair. They were assigned to relieve our badly battered infantry, which nearly precipitated mutiny.

We had been hacking away at this particular front for quite a while. Now, with all the artillery in the world massing—enough to blow a beautiful boulevard clean to Berlin—our boy friends were being yanked out, and the Marines were about to cash in on their chips. We mentioned this to various groups of Devil Dogs with the usual results. Several of us got a brisk little workout before the actual battle started.

It was slow coming, that battle. Evidently G. H. Q. was taking no chances. The veined roads, empty by day, teemed at night as more and more and still more Americanos boiled up to the front lines and hung up their hats. Whatever happened, it was sure to be the biggest gate in history.

For three days we held fire while the Germans pegged away at everything they saw: Americans, trees, Chocolat Menier signs, and barn doors. They were war crazy, those boys. Shells for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; and all night long the strange slither and slap of poison gas. The green wisps inched along the ground in the milky moonlight, fingering the sleeping caballeros, bringing us to our knees in the mud as we clawed at our masks. Sometimes we wore them for eight hours at a stretch, staring at each other through dirty bits of glass, chewing on stale rubber hose, and thinking long, long thoughts.

Sample:

"Four hours of this is entirely too much. I wish I'd joined the navy. Those boys got it soft, all right. Nice soft hammocks. Hot baths. Elegant food. It's a wonder more of them aren't sissies. A lot of them are, or maybe it's just the hats that make them look that way.

"I would rather be shot than wear a gob's hat, with all those ribbons on it. They probably wear elastic under their chins when soldiers aren't around. . . . I wonder if I got any letters on me. Oh, for the love of God . . . there's that ten page la-de-da from Ruth. All sunshine, she is. I wonder why she doesn't go to night school and learn longhand, or buy a typewriter, or break her arm. Blah, blah, blah, blah, and 'we had such a wonderful dance on board Lionel's boat. It's a subchaser.'

"I would hate to tell you what I think anybody named Lionel is. I don't know why I even open her letters—they make me so mad. I would rather correspond with the captain. . . . Damn that louse! (Not the captain.) I wish he would trip and break his neck. I wish lots of things. I wish I was General Pershing. *He* doesn't have to sit in a lot of mud sherbet with his face in a wet balloon. Not *that* baby.

"He's probably having his breakfast in bed in some swell Paris hotel. Sixteen majors and a field clerk drawing his bath. . . . I wish this damned war was over. . . . I wish my kid brother would quit making passes at my girl friends or quit writing results, one or the other. It's the hat, I guess. A girl will do a great deal in these trying times for an aviator's hat, and he seems to have a trunk full of them. It's the hat and the whole officer system.

"I wonder if Lieutenant Skinner really said he wouldn't speak to his brother if his brother was a private. You can never believe Quisno. And there's that law about shooting officers. I would shoot Skinner for fifty cents—with a giggle. . . .

"I wish I would get a letter from Alice. I'd write her if I knew how to spell her last name. It's my fault, only you can't ask a girl you've known for two years how to spell her last name. It could be Walz or Walls or Wauls or Wallace—I wouldn't know. She certainly was an elegant dish of beans. . . .

"Five hours. This is a lot of hooey. I wish that General Pershing had this pair of pliers on his nose. Maybe we'd get somewhere. . . ."

And so on. Besides the monotony of gas there was more or less starvation. All the boys we could spare prowled the neighbouring ration dumps, but with little or no luck. Even the amateurs had learned to watch their chow, although Porch Climber was successful in pinching a sack of bread from a Marine detachment. Another raid yielded a pail of bacon grease, and for three days we lived by painting the bread with grease and frying it on a rusty field stove. The result was entitled French toast.

Everybody longed for the battle to begin, feeling that it would mean food, anyhow. German prisoners invariably were well heeled with such items as salmon and hardtack, not to mention a coffee substitute that tasted like Bull Durham. It was part of their efficient training never to nibble at reserve rations, a rule that saved many Americans from starvation.

Two more days passed—dull days, during which we lay low in the mud and spoke bitterly of the war. No war is fun when you get a cold mud pack with every exploding shell and skies are dripping ice water. Water was a foot deep in some of the flops, and the boys were beginning to cough.

Meanwhile, the mysterious tension of impending battle began to mount. The Germans felt it and sent over a tornado of shell that about used up the entire Krupp output for 1916, '17 and '18. It got on our nerves, especially as we had to desert our flops twice a night and dive like seals into the deeper, colder, and damper trenches beside the guns. So it was a great relief when Captain Stone announced, on midnight of the 31st, that the attack would commence at dawn.

In the last patriotic outburst of the war the cannoneers banded together and agreed to stick to the guns through pneumonia, gas, and mortal injury. We were so short-handed that every man was indispensable. Following this Episcopalian double-ring ceremony a courier galloped up with mail and thirty-six bars of chocolate—a neat touch of drama.

Letters were distributed by candlelight, shielded by the top's helmet; and the gloom of the gentlemen who had been overlooked would have made a general weep. We held matches for each other until all the mail was read. Most of it revealed that our girls were getting married to naval ensigns in droves, or were giving lawn parties for second lieutenants. Several correspondents cracked jokes about cooties —and what a word that is! All in all, it was the most discouraging mess of sweetness and light ever dished out.

Toward morning we split up the chocolate, sadly ate it up, and posted ourselves at the guns. Again we swore that we would stick in real Zouave fashion. The captain squeezed our hands with real affection, implying long good-byes. There was an excess of sentiment all around. If the attack had been postponed another day we would have been playing post office and kiss the pillow.

The shadowy tanks dipped along in the misty moonlight—Colonel Reilly had promised the doughboys that "this time they would lose no bolts or screws." (So many had never reached first base at St. Mihiel.) Behind them the doughboys—a slow, murmuring river. The night became grayer and grayer, and at last was ripped open by ten thousand cannon.

The old and pretty picture followed. Fountains of red, white, and blue spray as more and more rockets rushed upward from the German lines. White-hot shells splashed like comets across the sky, while the sheet lightning of thousands of cannon made the surrounding hills and woods look like something in a flickering 1905 movie.

Almost at once the Germans found us with a couple of batteries, and a dozen hissing white bursts plumped in and about the gun pits every minute—on the minute. We were still holding fire until such time as the doughboys ran the Germans into effective range. So we ducked and dug and wondered how in hell we were going to fire with a million chunks of steel fluttering around like lame pigeons.

Our own heavies opened up. The incoming shells began to skip a beat, then another, until they dwindled to three or four a minute. As well as if we had been there we knew that three miles away several German gunners had gone to heaven. Also that we would not be likely to join them for quite a while. It is usually the first ten minutes of battle that incloses the sad fate of an artillery outfit.

Dawn limped over the horizon. We stood by as Captain Stone fingered his wrist watch and cursed his current dog robber for stealing his secret supply of coffee.

Directly in back of us the reserve machine guns broke out with unexpected clatter. They were less than a hundred yards away, and the bullets clipped close, hissing like steam. A good high jumper would have come down in six pieces. So close and unseemly was the barrage—intended to precede the doughboys—that one nervous lieutenant mistook it for enemy fire and slid into the second piece flop faster than an African puma, calling on one and all to take shelter and sell their lives as dearly as possible.

We had been swapping eating tobacco with the machine gunners all afternoon and knew what was going on; but there was so little fun those days that we had to make the most of everything. So Buck Somers and Jack Walsh increased the lieutenant's distress by firing their 45's over his little cave and yelling loudly in bum German. The captain put a stop to the fun by ordering us to load. In three seconds we were slinging the wickedest barrage of the war.

It lasted eleven hours. Load and fire, load and fire—fire, fire, fire. Tons of German shell smashed against our sandbags unnoticed as the monotonous, rhythmic, slam-bang cadence kept up and up, a foot at a time. Judging from our ranges we must have been on top of the *Landwehr;* so close, in fact, that our own shells occasionally cracked the top of the crest, two hundred feet ahead, obliging us to duck our own damage.

The Heinies talked back a little. Incoming gifts blinked in the night and burst in the dawn, and Charlie Schell got a machine-gun bullet in his shoulder. Faithful to our death pact, he stuck the whole route, screwing fuses with his good arm until cease fire came down.

It was a slick barrage, much too good for the Marines. Two guns fired high explosive, one shrapnel and one smoke; and up and down the entire front every battery was repeating the order with an extra cup of coffee. The murdering fire rolled forward like lava, stamping out everything in its path. Pieces of Germans hung from every standing tree, and the ground was plowed up real pretty. Even birds were killed.

Behind the rolling curtain of smoke and steel straggled the weary doughboys and Marines, not as cocky as they had been earlier in the war, but still worth twice their weight in Germans. Or French. Or English. The Katzies were fighting hard and shooting everything they had—shells, rockets, buffalo nickels—but principally their lunch. A few slipped through the iron brooms and made a bee line for American hospitality and food. As usual we frisked schnapps and iron rations as they passed the guns.

One kiddie named Ludwig, a hungry-looking Bavarian with a handlebar moustache, paused in his rush to the rear in the ridiculous hope of mooching a handout. Rations had miraculously arrived during the morning, and by pointing at a side of beef and rubbing his belly vigorously Ludwig indicated that he was in a fair way of being hungry. It made no impression on us. We'd been starving for a week and were getting hard hearted.

But when Ludwig, in the courses of watching us shoot up his countrymen, let on that he was a cook it was a different matter. The little Greek had remained at the horse lines to catch up on his gambling, leaving the raw beef and sundries to cook themselves.

It was voted that Ludwig dish up lunch while we dealt destruction. He got on the job with apple-cheeked alacrity and in half an hour produced a bean soup like nothing in all the world. It was an exquisite soup, a pearl among soups, and confirmed our long-standing hunch that our Mr. Papolis was a Greek chippy-chaser who had obtained his cook's job under the falsest of pretensions. We guzzled a washtubful while waiting for the roast. And what a roast!

Accustomed as we were to fried boots and saddles, heavily anointed with Greek perspiration, this beef, delicately pink and tender, was as unexpected as squab. We embraced Ludwig and asked him if he would consider joining the American army at one hundred dollars a month, the same to be chipped in by members of the battery. Ludwig was intoxicated with joy and generously offered to join up for nothing. As he made this statement he ate a sparerib, bones and all.

A few Marines passed by, shepherding two hundred prisoners. They gave Ludwig a bad eye. Instantly alarmed, we shed our khaki blouses until we found one of Ludwig's approximate size and crowded him into it. There was no use taking chances with a good cook.

Ludwig was delighted with the change and asked for a monkey hat. By four in the afternoon he was as upstanding an American as you would want to see anywhere. By five o'clock he was beefing about General Pershing and demanding (in German) why we didn't get real rations, like the regular army. With the exception of field-gray pants and black knee boots—for which we had no substitutes—Ludwig was as American as a stack of wheat cakes.

We complimented him on his citizenship and hoped that he would do something extraordinary in the way of dinner. Ludwig stated that we could cut off his ears if he didn't produce the most elegant repast we had ever punished, hinting darkly at *Apfelkuchen, Kartoffel,* and *Schweinfleisch,* all to be real home cooking.

As he drew plans for the meal the Greek appeared, bulging with francs. He was immediately put on kitchen police amid terrible yowls. We had a maestro on the job and intended to keep him there.

But man proposes and God disposes. We were still firing, late in the afternoon, still running the Heinies bow-legged, when another batch of prisoners came by, escorted by a still surlier mess of Marines. In the midst of his housework Ludwig spotted a Bavarian boy friend named Willie and couldn't resist rushing out to the road and waving a greasy ladle. He had gained nearly twenty-five pounds since morning.

He called Willie's attention to this and urged him to join the U. S. army, where the war was something like it. The astounded and angry Marines pounced like panthers and had Ludwig in the ranks, ladle and all. As many of us as could leave the guns rushed to the rescue, but we were heavily outnumbered. The chances are that Ludwig was shot. We went back to our old leather diet.

Cease fire came down shortly before sunset. Since early morning we had blown the Germans out of house and home. Reports were that they were twelve kilometres away and still running.

Our own casualties had been light considering all the iron that had been skimming around. Addie Moore had been gassed silly but was able to serve the guns until the end. A shell had nearly torn Buck Somers's leg off. He did the heroic thing of asking for a cigarette and then borrowed all the money in the battery for circulation in the hospital areas.

Our last range was the extreme limit of fire. It looked as if the Germans had swiped our slogan of "Berlin or Bust." We certainly were running them out of gas. It was grand to shed iron hats and gas masks and twirl a dream, as the handmade construction of cigarettes was called. Like Paris garters—no metal could touch us any more.

While Number One men doused the white-hot guns the rest of us slept or halted the long lines of German prisoners and prowled them for schnapps. We felt so sure and safe and swell that we squatted by the muddy road and sang the prisoners a little song about the Eisenbahn. And suddenly above the sunshine and laughter came a disturbing, familiar sound. A 42-centimetre shell seemed to be coming our way, when it had no business to.

At the first dull boom every Heinie and Yank in the road congealed into a handsome waxwork effect. The iron monster drew nearer at the rate of 165 miles a minute. The roaring became louder, more unpleasantly centrifugal, more intimate and personal. A thousand human beings miraculously disappeared in ditches, shell holes, and latrines as a large barrel of dynamite descended into an abandoned farmhouse and blew it to hell.

"*That* wasn't fair," complained Art Williams mildly—at length. Art was a man given to clean living, high ideals, and gentlemanly language, as behooved a volunteer Y. M. C. A. worker. We supplemented his inarticulate opinions with a few remarks about the Marine Corps that made all further comment on this valuable branch of the service rather silly. Obviously a Teufelhund (Marine) or group of Teufelhunds (Marines) had come across the gun abandoned by the Germans and had wondered whether or not it was loaded; thereby creating another bond between us.

When we recovered from our start we discussed the glowing future. Now we *would* get a rest, and probably one of those fourteen-day leaves they were always giving out—in the *Stars and Stripes*. We had been shooting people for nearly nine solid months and looked like it. This time, we agreed, General Pershing would *have* to unbelt with a pass to Paris. So, as always, we were ordered to shut up, pack up, and keep going. And like it.

We moved out and ahead. It was raining again

—in sheets. It came down with the force of Niagara, pounding on our tin hats, soaking into our marrow, blinding the horses so that they fell into every shell hole on the road. The carriages were swept off the road time and again, and there were long halts during which we crept under the guns and optimistically tried to roll cigarettes with wet paper and soggy Bull Durham.

The officers sloshed up and down the dripping ranks, threatening smokers with death in many extraordinary forms. (The officers were getting silly by that time.) Those of us who waded after the column had fun during the halts by wading up to the forward section and calling out of the darkness that hated and universal query of the A. E. F.:

"What outfit, buddy?"

Wearily our poor soaked comrades would answer; whereupon the jokers in the shadows would play they were Marines and twit the battery on its accomplishments in the war, adding many disparaging remarks concerning the regiment, the 42d Division, and the National Guard.

For a time the forward sections advised the supposed Marines to button their noses, until the remarks got too personal, when they swore dejectedly, tied reins to their saddles, and dismounted sadly and with intent to kill. On discovering who their tormentors really were they were so sore that they fought it out anyhow.

What a night and *what* a night! Endless columns of German prisoners going slop-slop along the other side of the road, talking like tonsils, on their way to warm American beds, dry American clothes, and hot American food. We felt like kicking them in the pants.

Beside one German officer limped a beautiful police dog. Somebody grabbed it. It would have been taken away from the *Hauptmann* anyhow at the first concentration point, and we needed a dog. The German consigned his little pal to us with many tears. He said the mutt's name was Max and that we should be very careful when we took the machine-gun bullet out of his foot on account of Max being the greatest human being in the world. We promised, and gave his owner a can of corned willie and fifty francs. The operation was performed on the spot. Max howled forward toward Germany.

Past Sommerance the moon went out entirely, and the officers lost their way. The cannoneers took advantage of the wait to duck into a shack at the side of the road, safe from the roaring rain. Between cigarettes talk turned to food, and everybody took a crack at inventing a suitable menu for our first dinner on American soil. In included seventeen kinds of soup, steak six inches thick (buttered), potatoes in every known style, beets, cauliflower, asparagus, squash, wheat cakes, several turkeys, chickens, cows, reindeer, and such other edible animals as came to mind. The meeting broke up in disorder when we discovered a crate of condemned beans.

On Dead Man's Hill, near St. Juvin, a bread truck lay stalled on the road. We went through it like something through you know what. The driver defended his load to the last and then said he guessed it was all right anyhow, as the war was over.

Three German envoys, he said, had come over the line blindfolded to kiss and make up with Foch, Pershing, and Haig. We laughed heartily, and he got sore.

We were still laughing as we pressed on, our blouses stuffed with bread, and singing the Raggedy-What-Do-You-Call-It-Cadets; although the bread proprietor was more than half right, as it turned out.

At Thenorgues we flopped in a field and snored like generals, although our clothes froze to the ground. One hour's sleep and it was giddy-ap again. Some Y. M. C. A. secretaries overtook us at Buzancy in a swell automobile. One of them had the misfortune to laugh, politely—doubtless with good reason. Even Y. M. C. A. men have to laugh. But we interrupted the snicker as detrimental to our good name and forthwith stopped the car. In gifted and bitter terms we told the boys off, hinting broadly at canine connections and curious appetites.

Through Bar to Harricourt, where there were barracks. Very lousy barracks, but barracks. The last ten miles had been a feat of somnambulism. We threw ourselves on the crawling wet straw, packs and all. The Sand Man came like a shot. So did a squadron of German bombing planes, and hammered and hammered and hammered with wash-boiler bombs. The barracks rocked like a rowboat in mid-Atlantic. Now and then a side wall would fall in, or a tree from some neighbouring village would come through the roof.

We rose on our elbows and waited for the aviators to let up, but they had no notion of letting up. Obviously they were the same humans in fiend form who had incensed the A. E. F. by blowing up the coeducational centre at Bar-le-Duc, killing three of the bonniest lassies who ever mistook a cigar coupon for a five-dollar bill. Several times we were ordered into the fields, since it was apparent that the barracks were the targets; but the men were too tired, and it was too cold outside. Better a good clean bomb than pneumonia.

"My God!" groaned a voice, as one explosion blew in the doors. "I'll never feel safe till we're back in the front lines."

By that time the Germans were taking the front lines back to Berlin at the rate of forty kilometres a day, and in our famished, exhausted state, it was almost impossible to keep up. The horses were dying like flies, and the men *would* have died had they had enough nerve.

Some of the drivers had been in the saddle so long that their legs, from crotch to instep, were caked with blood and cemented to their dirty pants. The cannoneers were worse off, if possible. (The condition of the horses forbade riding on the carriages.) The boys had scuffed through their shoes long ago, and the toes of several flopped out like frankfurters.

Everybody was sick, everybody was filthy, everybody was hungry and underweight. Sunken eyes peered out of deep tangled whiskers, and everybody was fidgety and cross. You could get a fight out of anyone with a dirty look.

It was impossible to leave Harricourt on our own steam, so the dying horses were cut out of the traces by nearly dying men, and the strongest of E and F batteries combined for a final dash. Everybody who could walk was in the parade.

Through Authe to Brieulles, where we caught up with the first wave of doughboys—now our own doughboys, under command of our own colonel, Hank Reilly. We were happy to learn that the doughboys liked him as well as we did. New York unbelted with food and coffee, and we swapped opinions of the war, as always. Our opinions always proved that (*a*) New York was the best regiment of infantry in the world, and (*b*) Illinois was the best artillery. A great comfort derived from these exchanges, however dark the day. Throughout the war it was New York and Illinois—against the world.

At Les Petites Armoises we took position for the night on a soggy yellow mound, more like a cow flop than a hill. The horses were all in from painful detours over dynamited roads. They couldn't make the grade up the hill.

Pappy Le Prohon appeared. He had been returned to us before the battle, and a happy homecoming it was, too. But now, at the defection of the horses, Pappy felt inclined to blame the drivers and gratuitously announced that when he was a lead driver back in the Philippines he could make horses climb palm trees.

The men were in a tough mood and withheld the usual applause at the old gag; whereupon Pappy pulled a driver from his saddle and undertook to eat his words. He socked the horse in the ribs and emitted a geyser of loud Canadian French, words sounding like cognac labels. The horse gently folded his legs and died.

It was a gesture so simple, so charming, so like what everyone of us wished he would do that we set up a loud cheering, which caused Pappy to burst important blood vessels, chiefly the ones in his neck.

Standing in the wet field, with shells bursting in air, he bawled at the top of his 42-centimetre voice that:

1. He had been twenty-six years in the so-and-so regular army.

2. He was the best so-and-so horseman in the same so-and-so army.

3. He was now a First so-and-so lieutenant, by Gar.

4. As such he was entitled to shoot any so-and-so-and-so who laughed at him.

5. However, he was able and willing to kill everybody present with his bare fists instead.

6. He was liable to lose his temper if we didn't watch out.

All of these statements were received with loud and enthusiastic cheers. Pappy blew up completely and screamed swear words that were nothing short of genius. The war stopped cold while we egged him on. Unquestionably he would have gone screaming, tittering nuts if Captain Stone hadn't intervened.

Eventually we scrambled into position and passed the night carrying ammunition from the horse lines to the guns and back again. For no reason. Nobody got a minute's sleep. And why should they? The officers caught their usual eight hours. And why shouldn't they?

Before starting forward the officers gave us a little talk. The command was forward, and to get anywhere we would have to strip down to the minimum of equipment, it seemed. All the priceless German helmets we had strapped to the caissons in the hope of mailing them back to our doting women were to be thrown away. So were the blankets we had stored there, although it was freezing cold. So was the extra underwear we had planned to put on the first time we stopped long enough for change. Hereafter every item of equipment, short of harness and shell, would be carried on our bony backs. Orders.

The men yelled their hearts out, openly, loudly. Captain Stone was firm. In the end we said all the known words and threw our blankets, shelter halves, tent pins, mess kits, and underwear into the adjacent trees, reserving one wet blanket apiece.

The lieutenants tried to kiss in with the captain by quelling this perfectly natural demonstration and heard words and phrases that made their ears grow a foot. Their shushing was a bit inappropriate, especially as we knew that *their* bedding—pneumatic and a foot thick—was in the supply wagon.

It remained there until the first halt, when we tied ropes from each blanket roll to the trees along the road. Again "Forward" came down. The sagging mules gave a tug. The fat rolls flopped out of the wagon and with them all the German binoculars, French cognac, devilled ham, hair tonic, silk underwear, and other curiosities peculiar to officers. What was sauce for the goose was tabasco for the gander.

A day's march on split and bleeding feet. At sunset we halted past La Neuville and were ordered to dig forty degrees in bed rock. Blasting wouldn't have accomplished more than twenty degrees, and we set up another yell, led by one of the three non-coms who were forever informing the officers as to what could be done with chevrons—in a pinch. The officers sought to admonish, then calm, and were told curious facts about shoulder bars.

These remarks, incidentally, were the sort of blaaa-blaaa-blaaas that sometimes pass between husband and wife—healed the moment an outsider appeared or danger threatened. The officers finally gave up and went to bed. That is, they summoned their dog robbers and *prepared* to go to bed.

When the rape of the blanket rolls was discovered they set up a yodelling that beat ours by eight octaves and sixteen miles. They yelled so loud that we were afraid the Germans would hear them, and we had to ask them to pipe down. Somebody laughed, however, and the lamentations increased, plus threats to kill. It appeared that all their food had been stowed in the missing rolls, and they were hungry. We paid no attention, slugging away at the bed rock and singing:

If you want to find the officers,
We know where they are,
We know they are, etc., etc., etc., etc.

The more we laughed, the louder they yelled. Officers have no particular sense of humour. Their conduct at the loss of their bedding was only an indicator. The jokes they told and laughed at over their mess when the war was over established this lack beyond reasonable doubt.

Toward midnight someone discovered four cans of salmon in a clump of German dead. Lieutenant Skinner smelled it a kilometre away and drifted over with many soft words. They were as softly returned, but there was no handout. One reach, and five Weary Willies would have chopped his arm off. And eaten it, probably.

CHAPTER XI

Several French and German generals had met, swapped cigars, spat on their shoes for luck, and agreed upon an armistice; yet the bitterest fighting of the war had just begun. In the ensuing forty-eight hours before the whistle blew we raced through more slaughter than on any other front—useless slaughter, which doubtless will be cleared up to the satisfaction of all concerned on the Day of Judgment.

Our goal was Sedan, the goal of the French and of the 1st Division. We were quite willing to split honours with the French. They were the inventors of *anis de loso* and deserved consideration. But we certainly didn't propose to step aside for Pershing's Pets ten miles from the finish line, not after we had run the Germans all the way from the Aire; and when the rumour spread that we were to be withdrawn in favour of the 1st, whether we liked it or not, the Rainbow stepped heavily on the gas, to beat the order to Sedan. The 1st Division came hotly after and solemnly captured our divisional post of command twice; a joke that ran through the ranks and made us very happy indeed.

There was little else to be happy about, God knows.

Our food was still twenty miles to the rear, and we were chewing on the stringy, bitter roots of so-called sugar beets. Neat squares in the flanks of dead horses, lying about the fields, called our attention to the Algerian method of battling starvation, but we were sick as well as hungry. (Although the Algerians made horse seem very tasty, by boiling it with rice, pepper, and various weeds. Now and then they added a young French corporal, it was thought.) A few strong stomachs finally got along on it, including the highly Southern digestive tracts of Massa Dyer and Massa Lieutenant Radford, who excused the necessity of mooching from our gracious and very black companions by setting forth that Algerians were really sunburned Jews, the remnant of a lost tribe.

In seven days we had averaged five meals and less than nine hours sleep, except for an occasional fifteen winks on the march. Those wishing to sleep accomplished it by holding onto the carriages with their hands and dropping off on their feet. Two men shuffled behind each carriage, walking along in their sleep. The horses snoozed the same way. So did the drivers.

Most of the bridges had been blown up, which involved quite a bit of wading around in ice water. Time and again the sleeping, silent column splashed into the drink; and amazing, aboriginal curses arose from sleepwalking cannoneers. It is no joke to wake up suddenly in four feet of ice water; although after the first shock, it was pleasant to hide along the river bank and watch the remaining sleepwalkers shoot the chutes. Nobody died of pneumonia those days, and it was all considered in the nature of fun.

At Chémery we caught up with the Germans on a broad, sweet road they hadn't time to blow up. They were in a stretch of frosty meadow, playing squat tag with the first wave of doughboys. We made a pretty target as we rounded the turn on the gallop, and they potted away with a couple of batteries. In a neatly executed manœuvre we split up in sections and ran through the bursts in elegant style. The doughboys were much moved and paused to cheer as carriage after carriage sprinted past the danger point and took cover behind a hill two or three hundred feet ahead. In a minute we were screened from further fire and were trotting along with something like the old pepper, kidding such 1st Division boys as we met on their chances of reaching Sedan.

A clammy fog came from the Meuse and crept down the valley. It obscured everything but the road, which began to travel across a deep ravine. In the centre was a bridge. The rest was embankment. We were within spitting distance of Sedan now. The milestones, tiny smudges in the fog, were down to 10K. Nothing could stop us now, and we swapped prospects happily with the first wave of doughboys, surging abreast. (The 1st Division was miles behind.) Suddenly the fog shuddered. There was a dull and imminent thunderclap fifty yards ahead. The Germans had mined the bridge. Through the murk we saw sections of it go.

That was depressing because it left us stranded on the narrow embankment that approached the wreckage. We sat a spell, waiting for further orders. Below us, to the left, our doughboys floundered in the fog, banging away with machine gun and Chau-chat at every looming bulk. Orders of their officers and non-coms came sharply through the soup, so close that they seemed under our wheels. Bullets whined like trolley wires, and through the crevices of sound came the oompah orders of the enemy. Evidently the Germans had stopped us just in time. Running smack into a German infantry division might have been embarrassing.

The drivers dismounted to mooch eating tobacco off the cannoneers, while Captain Stone gumshoed back a piece to find out where in hell we were and how we could get out and who won the World's Series. We relaxed. It had been a tough push, all on the double, and it seemed pleasant to sit fifty feet above a battle and hear the doughboys do their stuff. Except for stray bullets we were safe, because invisible in the fog.

The rattle of machine guns increased. Apparently the boys were getting a run for their money. And then in slow, wet swirls the mist began to lift. We got a look at things. At the left, where the road bank abruptly tobogganed into the field, four companies of doughboys zigzagged shoulder high through the suds. Here and there a machine-gun nest blocked their advance. They stalked slowly in little groups, chewing the rag, dropping, crawling on all fours, running, dropping again until a neatly placed bayonet or grenade expressed the Germans C. O. D. their Maker. Now and then some New York husky made a pretty end run and fell on the flop ears from behind. There were many thrilling individual exploits. Grenades and trench knives and don't forget to write. A few Heinies threw up their hands and lived to tell the story.

We were itching to blow a couple of Dutch buddies out of their flops, there being nothing else to do, but Pappy Le Prohon decided against it. We were many miles ahead of reserve ammunition, and he felt we would look silly in Sedan, pointing empty guns at the local police department. Every shell was worth its weight in 1852 half dollars.

A wind blew up, and the mist lifted entirely. We got out our stolen field glasses and had a look. Not so good. On the crest of the hill across the valley were two batteries of artillery, thoroughly manned and pointing our way. We knew the Germans were never the boys to point in fun, and there was a scramble for the horses, the laws of God and the field artillery being that no driver deserts his horse in time of danger, possibly because horses get so lonesome.

The gun crews yanked at breech covers and prepared to do a little pointing themselves. But again Pappy stepped in. Orders were to fire only at the request of the doughboy general. He had made no such request. It made no difference that we were about to be annihilated. Orders, as the Boy on the Burning Deck discovered, are hooey, but orders. So we got as close to the road as possible and waited for the worst.

The first shell was a long time coming, at least five seconds. A puff and a report, an alley-cat scream, and crash as it burned into the embankment on which we crouched. A long two seconds for corrected ranges and a second shell screamed over our heads. As veteran artillerists we bade farewell to this fine, pretty world with all its swell restaurants and red-headed women and began thinking of things we could say to God.

Eight scattered and rather pretty puffs from the hill; then a black and stinging whirlpool in the road. Several horses went down in heaps, crying, kicking; the drivers fighting to cut them from the harness. More pink puffs drifted from the hill, and more cyclones of jagged steel boiled out of the road. Dick Patton, fresh from a recitation of Mr. Herrick's polite verses, got a fragment in the arm that spun him clean off his nag. Rush Dyer and some others hustled him behind a steeply pitched stone barn. He was wounded again on the way. A dozen doughboys, who had been scrapping over some corn willie halfway up the embankment, vanished into thin air leaving the corn willie untouched. Fifteen of our badly needed horses joined them in the Great Beyond. All in the first thirty seconds of play.

We were still waiting for orders. At length—about thirty-one seconds after the fun began—Pappy Le Prohon decided that war wasn't that important and came stamping through the shell bursts on his game leg, bawling orders to cut the horses out of the traces and take shelter on the safe side of the road bank. He stumped from section to section to see that the boys didn't short-cut by cutting the traces with knives. And just to show us his feeling in regard to death and danger, Pappy removed his helmet (already ripped in a couple of places) and addressed his gallant beer belly squarely to the foe.

All of us knew that Pappy secretly longed to die in action and, out of respect, we paused in our getaway to see his epic end. But God evidently intended that our favourite first lieutenant should go on accumulating varicose veins and manly memories for a long while to come; for the more Pappy bellowed commands over the crash and whirr of 77's, the more widely they missed his unmissable barrel legs and bulging belly. His big blue underlip hung out a foot from pure contempt of death. The face that had scared a thousand shavetails out of a year's growth disappeared in every black burst, and immediately reappeared, as fresh as a daisy—or shall we say eggplant? There were a few rips in his size 65 blouse, his two-and-a-half-pound nose seemed a bit more battered at times, but he was safe and sound and invulnerable. Under his cool command we had the horses over the embankment in no time. Five or six of them were killed on the way, but the men were all safe.

The ravine was protected by three sharp slopes, but the Germans kept picking on us with reduced charges (which dropped vertically from above) and gas. Again Pappy demonstrated his wish to die by charging among the frightened horses, minus gas mask and helmet. His suicidal mania was nearly gratified this time, as he picked up quite a snootful of mustard. But when it was suggested that he go to the hospital, he entered upon the most original and extensive flow of profanity ever heard in that part of the world, the more marvellous because of the choking effect of the gas.

For three hours the Dutchmen filled our small ravine with mustard and shell. With all that time on our hands we played pussy-in-the-corner with a unit of 1st Division infantry that had arrived in our wake. The game was to pick the most likely flops. When groups of the 1st abandoned a red-hot shell hole we raced to take their places and found them very safe. Whereas, whenever 1st Division boys moved into *our* vacant flops they were promptly killed. The coincidence was a bit spooky. (As pointed out earlier in this sober work, the Armistice had been arranged hours before, and the opposing generals were then calling each other by their first names.)

Several of the battery distinguished themselves to the point of earning citations for heroism. One of them got to be a corporal later, demonstrating that there is some justice in the U. S. army. Incidentally the battery was again cited for conduct under fire, although the citation wasn't anything we could eat.

A slight attempt at murder may be recorded: When the fire was hottest the Bey of Algiers sought shelter in a shallow ditch from which he was visible to several of his subjects who were safely tucked behind a stone barn. It occurred to these subjects that it was a fine moment to make salaams, knowing that the Bey would be compelled to acknowledge the salute by rising in a cyclone of shell fragments to bow. Several salutes were exchanged, to the Bey's anguish, before the humorists laid off.

Late in the afternoon New York had the German batteries on toast, and it was safe to emerge from the ravine and be on our way. Except for our wounded everybody was present or accounted for—everybody, that is, but Mr. Harry Papolis, the Fascinating Greek. Since there were no women to chase and no sides of beef he could swap for souvenirs we began poking around the piles of dead, feeling very sorry and forgiving. After all, Greeks are not like other boys. Suddenly a terrific yodelling broke out from behind the barn. We traced it to an old stone well, and finally to Harry, standing in five feet of slightly used water, casting a few Greek runes for luck. Since his incantations were audible for miles they may be said to have availed. We fished him out, hitched the surviving horses to the *matérial,* and retired a kilometre or two for the night. So many horses had been killed that the move had to be made in three trips.

All of us felt quite lucky to be alive, which contributed undue vivacity to the march—a vivacity the officers felt disposed to reprove. Things started when Pappy Le Prohon, husky from gas, ordered Jack Weiner to get off the supply wagon, by Gar, and walk. Jack rashly declined to do so, which was a little like eating ground glass on a bet. Pappy promptly stopped the column and announced hoarsely that, by Gar, he would kill Weiner with a gun, as provided by military regulations. Weiner replied that Pappy would do well to kiss, and not mention Gar anymore. It was all unprecedented and very beautiful. Hysteria, engendered by a week's desperate going, without food or sleep, caused us to applaud Pappy and Weiner impartially; until Pappy hauled Jack down by the leg and threw him fifty feet. Rolling his bad eye over his admirers, he regretted that he had no bullets to spare on so-and-so so-and-sos. A certain emphasis implied that the entire battery should feel grateful because of this shortage.

Bill Youngman's lead horse took it in his head to quit the damn war cold, and Lieutenant Skinner properly ordered Bill to beat his backside with a steel helmet. But Bill had the character of St. Francis of Assisi and refused. When Lieutenant Skinner insisted, Bill offered to tear his (Lieutenant Skinner's) head off and eat it with salt and pepper—an amazing proposition for Bill, whose heart was a garden of roses ordinarily.

But when we saw the position picked by the mental marvels who commanded us it was like a revolution at the zoo. The defilade ran the wrong way, for one thing; it was of solid rock, for another. We were ordered to dig twenty-six degrees, anyhow. When we pointed out the physical impossibility of the job the officers lost their tempers. So did we (on account of being tired). We finally ran one of the substitute lieutenants out of the proposed gun pits with a few words that left red welts all over his beautiful white body. He retaliated by putting us all under arrest, which was rather silly under the circumstances. We dug elsewhere until dawn.

The doughboys inched up during the night and were in front of Bulson, four kilometres ahead. We shoved off to join them, when it became apparent that our horses were all in, out, and down. Most of them were beyond standing on their legs. The rest had learned, with typical horse sense, that if they refused to pull, the men would pull for them. That was known as Horse's Law. No amount of beating or entreaty could change their minds on this point. They knew their oats.

In the end we cut them from the traces and pulled the guns and carriages entirely by hand all the way up to the waiting doughboys. Most of the men were more bushed than the horses, and it was a long, tough grind. To make it we shed everything we had ever owned, down to our girls' photographs and extra razor blades. Prolonges were attached to the hubs, and we started out. Before Bulson was a hill one mile long. Direction, up. By midnight we had accomplished it, after eighteen hours of bellyaching and blistering hard work. The total distance thus achieved was about two miles and a half.

Some comfort was derived from the fact that it was getting late in the year and night came quickly; ideal conditions for razzing the officers. They kept their dignity by pretending not to know who made all the remarks that bounced about the hill from sunset to Bulson. A few nitwits among them became quite panicky, mistaking the fun for incipient mutiny, and so reported to the captain.

Battery D preceded us in Bulson a little after midnight. (They had overtaken us with their horses, and suffered heavily for their zeal.) Direct hits were made on two caissons as they galloped over the crossroads in the middle of town. They burst into flames, with tragic magnificence. Plunging horses. Dead drivers caught in the harness. A hundred shells popping under the caisson doors. We took it easier, shoving over the crossroads immediately after each burst without particular damage, although the Greek addressed his mighty mind to the problem of timing the shells, with the result that he ran his kitchen smack into a barrage. The kitchen was retrieved after it had been punctured with several big holes that should have been in the Greek.

Past Bulson we established temporary horselines in a wood and promptly were blown out of it, which cleaned up *that* end of the matter. We later learned our movements were being signalled by a bright Fritz who had remained after his pals made their home run. What with one thing and another the division lost heavily in dead, though our sole casualty in Bulson was a man attached to us from E Battery.

At dawn we were on the crest overlooking Sedan and dug in. The doughboys were already in town, having won our race with the 1st Division by several lengths. Hank Reilly, who had been detached from us to command the infantry, had halted them on the outskirts of town from motives of tact. The French were sweating up from the other side, burning to take the city and thus get the taste of 1870 out of their mouths. Reilly, quite a hand for the *beau geste,* had been content with a guard of honour. So it was all over. We trained our guns on the Meuse and had a chew of tobacco. It was a good war, God was in His Heaven, and Pippa yourself, and see how you like it.

Sedan lay under the crest a hundred yards ahead, but nobody felt like taking a look. We were too busy shooting craps to study any ancient historical spots, especially since it didn't look as if we were going to fire. There wasn't much money in the outfit, and I O U's were abundant. Great Greek screams arose when somebody lost 800,000 francs to Mr. Papolis, who had wanted to quit gambling when he was 500 francs ahead and who now realized that the debt was outlawed by its enormity. Nothing was collectable over 500 francs (100 in those days), and the wise guys quit at that point.

So dawned the 10th of November. Accustomed to army tactics, we wondered if we would be invited to cross the Meuse or spend the winter where we were. Up and down the river the doughboys were crossing with shocking losses, and there was no good reason why we should die, too—except that the war was over. Suddenly the rumour spread that we would be relieved within an hour. That was carrying the joke too far, and the first man to spread the report took a sock on the nose. But it was repeated by Lieutenant Radford and presently by Captain Stone himself. In ten months' fighting we had never actually been relieved. In fact, it was our favourite joke that the Rainbow relieved the 42d and that the 42d then relieved the Rainbow—together with several other jokes we will skip. So that when we packed and pulled out of the line it was in a daze.

We borrowed some horses and pulled out of that sector like the Twentieth Century going through Poughkeepsie. Outside of Bulson we ditched our ammunition and rattled on. M. P.'s lined the road. They smiled for a change and told us we were going to Bordeaux, where the wine comes from. There were stock answers to this remark, and we passed them around; but hope springs eternal in the human breast, and we were still quite human. Before long we were yelling across the horses' heads as follows: Suppose General Pershing *had* gone off his nut (it looked reasonable, what with his pulling us out of the front) suppose he really *was* sending us to Bordeaux. A great many speculations on Bordeaux women, wine, women, omelettes, women, and women ensued. We even took to singing a bit. Shells still shrilled past our ears, and the mood of the runaway was best expressed by: "Oh, Bury Me Not at Reherrey," which went on at the gallop until we reached Mon Idée Farm and bivouacked for the night.

Some newspaper correspondents were waiting in the barnyard, notably Freddie Smith of the Chicago *Tribune,* who told us with a dead pan that an armistice had been signed. None of us thought that Mr. Smith was especially funny. That school of humour approves of explosive cigars. We were polite, however. Mr. Smith insisted. The German delegates, he said, had already crossed the line and were matching nickels with Foch. Rather coldly we told him we got him the first time and rolled in for a little rest.

For the first time in more than a week nobody bothered us for nearly eight hours. In the morning we crawled out, dopy with sleep, and began thawing out our shoes. They had frozen solid during the night. A bonfire finally did the trick.

Behind us boomed the guns, giving Mr. Smith the bird (as the English have it) and denoting hard times for the winter. We limped along on our bum dogs—they were barking at every step—and finally made Harricourt, our starting point in the dash for Sedan. Vic Stangel was waiting. He had been about on his motorcycle and corroborated the armistice yarn. Mr. Stangel was a legitimate butt. We gave him the works.

The baggage detail that had kept the home fires burning in Harricourt while we were boxing with the Germans gave us quite a shock. They were so pink and fat, whereas we were bones. (One bird was so skinny that we spoke of using him for dice: he rattled so when he walked.) The contrast was so alarming that some of the veterans thought they were going to die, though they had been feeling like wildcats at the front.

These gloomy thoughts disappeared with a little more sleep. Our old billets, broken and overrun with rats and lice, looked like the Tuileries. We boarded up new shell holes against the cold, tore up sections of the floor to burn, and otherwise prepared for a nice nap. The wagon guard had razors, and in an hour we were real pretty—snoring pretty, too.

And the next morning was November 11th, that big day that people talk about so much.

The top sergeant got foolish in the head and tried to kick us out at six, which got him quite a collection of boots, bricks, and corn willie cans. At about ten we rolled out—bankers' hours, and why not? The barrage thundered on. At eleven o'clock it ceased, but nobody was much impressed by that. Barrages often stopped. Besides, we were too annoyed with the Greek to follow the war that closely. The bacon was raw, and he had made no effort to remove the old grounds from the coffee can. We found a Chinaman in that coffee can once, with a 1905 newspaper in his pocket.

Besides which the officers, alarmed at our remaining in bed, decided to check our free and easy ways with a slight dose of discipline. So it was announced that, all kidding over toward one side, all the guns and carriages would be scrubbed and polished at once. There was no immediate need for this operation, and the order provoked some back talk; especially when the dog robbers reported that the carriage business was only the beginning of a frank programme to keep us out of mischief and deflate us a bit. Since we had a remarkable esprit de corps we felt that any necessary discipline would return as a matter of course and that the officers needn't think up dirty tricks simply to hurry things along. It was too much like making us say Uncle. So we were in none too Christian a mood when the captain brought us to attention toward noon and remarked, with a look that dared anybody to make a wisecrack:

"I am very glad to announce that an armistice has been signed."

You could have knocked us over with a fender. Nobody made a sound. The captain seemed slightly annoyed. He repeated his news item.

"Three lousy cheers!" remarked a voice from the rear rank. It was the consensus of opinion. It was also the captain's cue.

"BUT!" he added, "BUT—there will be NO SLUMP in DISCIPLINE on THAT account! From now on there will be IRON DISCIPLINE! And I mean IRON DISCIPLINE!"

And iron discipline it was, to be sure. Right off—so that there would be no more funny business—a big inspection was ordered. That was rather nutty since we had nothing to inspect. All our belongings had been thrown away by the captain's orders when the horsies died. But since an inspection is the most annoying thing that can happen in any army we decided that it had been ordered for that very reason—and prepared for it in a suitable mood.

To help matters it began to rain, and the inspection was in the mud flats back of the village. While we waited for the captain to arrive the dog robbers appeared with news of what had gone on at officers' mess. (Dog robbers start most of the insubordination of an army. They feel less like menials when snitching on officers.) They brought disturbing news: (1) The officers had been eating steak again. (2) One had complained bitterly concerning the Armistice. His point seemed to be that he was making more money in the army than he had been able to command in civilian life, and he felt that stopping the war would set him back considerably. It occurred to us that this view might be universal among officers. We could eat cake, we supposed. (3) The inspection was a set-up, a test case. In other words, the officers were inviting insubordination in order to stamp it out. Which is all right except that officers should keep their yaps shut in front of dog robbers.

On receipt of these bulletins we kicked our carefully folded blankets into sloppy piles. A sardonic few tossed a Bible, a paper raincoat, or a solitary spoon or fork on top of the pile. So we waited.

The captain had no notion of our mood as he approached the inspection field in a new suit. Of course not. He had been eating steak. But when he saw the sloppy blankets he *knew* the mutiny was on and, to his vast credit, met us head on. Remarks came our way like so many tracer bullets. In a word, he implied that we were a bunch of bums in need of a good trimming which he would administer as follows: From 6 A. M. to 12 noon: Squads Right. From 1 P. M. to 6 P. M.: Squads Right. From 7 P. M. to 10 P. M.: Squads Right. Hard labour in the meanwhile.

Unfortunately he repeated his views on IRON DISCIPLINE at the end of his remarks, which provoked some fancy boos. Now the captain was not the boy to be booed, and he spun around as if someone had hit him on the back of the head with a baseball bat. For sixty seconds he favoured us with an oxy-acetylene stare, fatal at five hundred feet. Then he announced that:

(*a*) It was the first time he had ever been jeered at, and

(*b*) By Somebody-or-other, very important, it would be the last.

The last statement was crowding his luck somewhat. It was received with a *real* razzberry. The captain only stared, but there was murder in his eye. Very wisely he gave the battery to the top sergeant and walked away. There was something in his manner—a certain dignity—that was more effective than words. It indicated that evisceration was the least we could expect.

An hour later we formed for the massacre, glad that we had preserved our identification tags. The captain arrived. We stood perfectly still, respectfully waiting for the worst. With great dignity he said that he was sorry. We were, too—unanimously. All of us felt that he was a swell guy who had done a difficult thing very well. We were for him from that time on.

That night bonfires blazed from Switzerland to the sea. Until then the light of a cigarette had been the signal for a bushel of bombs. We tore the burlap sacks from the billet windows and let out a yell. For the first time we realized that the war was over. The war was really over!

CHAPTER XII

YOU would think that the Rainbow Division, punch-drunk from nine months of battle, toothless from hardtack, humpbacked from nine hundred thousand kilometres in saw-toothed army boots—you would think that such star-spangled veterans would be entitled to passage on the first boat leaving France after November 11th.

And again you would have another think coming. Big strong men were needed in Germany. We got the job.

Before we shoved off, General Pershing made us a small present of two hundred (200) horses and what horses! We thought we knew all about horses, but these goats were something else again. They must have escaped from a reform school. All of them were trained to roll in the mud the minute they were groomed, bite on the slightest provocation, and kick expertly with four heels. Every night they gathered at the picket line and thought up stinking tricks to play on us the next day. Beating did no good. They fought right back; and a kick in the pants when one is as skinny as we were is no laughing matter.

Just to make the joke complete, somebody else opened a deaf-and-dumb asylum at the same time and shipped us the inmates—chiefly officers.

We had more officers than men as it was, and when this new set of gold bricks pushed their pansy pans over the muddy horizon two days after the Armistice, the general feeling was "Why live?" All the new officers looked like animal crackers. The new men were worse. They should have been in bottles in some good medical school.

Moreover, they ate like ostriches and crashed the mess line five or six times a meal, which meant that *we* did without. It was hard to catch the bacon bummers because they all looked alike. And when we did catch them, argument was useless. None of them spoke English. The only practical solution was to burst them freely on all occasions, in which matter the innocent suffered with the guilty—but we ate.

Quite naturally the captain turned the battery over to the new officers. That gave him more time to confer with the major on the 1919 chances of the St. Louis Cardinals and how best to make us toe the mark. Lieutenant Waters sought to create a reign of terror by growing a moustache just like the Kaiser's. The rest of the officers took to walking fast and waving their arms, which demonstrated to the new lieutenants that they were efficient fellows with no time for nonsense.

Not to be outdone, the green Ikes scattered all over the place like Rhode Island Reds, trying to cover their inexperience by talking loud. Most of these new arrivals with shoulder bars had been drafted four months before in contrast to our year and a half of hallowed service. We laid for these babies loud and hard.

Our favourite diversion was to mistake them for enlisted men and bawl hell out of them for their sloppy appearance. When they explained—those among them who spoke English—that they were officers we were incredulous, then very apologetic. But like all jokes, it was overworked. "Hey, you sloppy so-and-so! Take that rubber out of your neck!" was yelled at so many mail-order officers that they waited on the captain one day and complained.

Conversation with our new buddies (through interpreters) made the Armistice seem more amazing than ever. They were hot off the firing line, they had been slinging barrages for nearly two weeks, and many of them still had no idea of the simplest functions of artillery. They didn't know, for instance, that shells were fused before they were fired or that the deviation of a hair on the sight bubble might kill Americans instead of Germans, or that ranges made any particular difference. Or anything else. Well, thank God *we* hadn't been ahead of them.

Accompanied by these hail fellows, all wet, we took a deep breath and started on the long, long trail to Germany, close on the heels of retreating roundheads. Incidentally, what soldiers those Germans were! Theoretically they were beaten to death, yet the only trace of their home run was an occasional neat pile of burning refuse beside the road. Remarkable, because the path of every American division we had followed was knee deep in rifles, picture books, Victrola records, water-colour outfits, and blankets. It was not pleasant to think that the groggy Germans were still as disciplined as the order of their retreat indicated. Boys that neat are just as apt to sock as keep on going.

For the first week after the Armistice we slogged south over frozen ruts, the cold rain beating through our paper raincoats. At night we flopped in sleety woods. We were still hiding, for some reason.

Everybody was cross. We would much rather have gone home than on, and those kiss-the-pillow replacements were getting on our nerves. We kidded the new officers a bit, to the infinite distress of Captain Stone. He believed the old hooey that good soldiers were seen and not heard; also that shoulder bars were shoulder bars if they were on a mule. Also that right made might.

The prevalent joke was to misunderstand all the new kiddos' orders until they complained that there was more intelligence in an idiot asylum than in the entire battery. Our invariable reply was that they ought to know. It was several days before we became reconciled to each other.

Landres-et-Saint-Georges again, Batheville, Aincreville, Doulcon again, Dun-sur-Meuse, before the lads in Paris could see their way clear to point us in the right direction. Shoes split apart on the frozen roads, and our toes flopped out again. Better a good clean war than lamming it over this ex-front like Coxey's army. At length Breheville, a stack of dirty shacks in a bog. Here we paused for breath and new equipment.

In the American army "reëquipment" denotes the process of giving size 16 soldiers size 49 pants, scraping his old ones off him by force. We were deloused and consequently made twice as lousy. Men who needed shoes were generously handed puttees. Men whose underwear was falling off were given New Testaments, translated from the original Greek and appointed to be read in churches. Dog robbers and quartermaster sergeants were given six of everything, as usual.

We were still limping through bleak country, naked of anything interesting to the eye, ear, nose, or throat. The civilian population remained in their holes waiting for ground-hog day. Remained gray forests, gray roads, gray fields, gray rivers. Far behind us were beautiful steamboats, sailing for New York, and field clerks getting stewed in Paris and tipping their hats to hotsy-totsies. Oh, well. We smothered our thoughts and pushed on toward Belgium.

The officers led the way on their new horses and acted as if they were going to a fire. One major officer discovered a group of the boys had fallen behind and undertook a round-up. He spurred his horse into the stragglers, calling them soldier names, despite the fact that their shoes and spirits were gone. His horse twice declined to run the men down, which saved this baby a sock on the nose, loudly promised by a dozen footsore Freddies.

Approaching Belgium, the scenery began to look up. At Montmédy we snored in a vast Zeppelin hangar, one whole side of which was adorned with caricatures of King Edward. Several details of the drawings were quite hot.

Early in the morning we crossed into Belgium, occupying St. Leger.

Now, we had heard a great deal of noise about suffering Belgium. Poor Little Belgium, Bleeding Belgium, and so forth; and we knew what was coming. More gypping, for instance. Nobody gyps like a good Honest-to-God Victim. With an open-handed American army to work on we knew they would retrieve four years of suffering in a week.

So when we marched down the main drag of St. Leger and discovered windows filled with women waving things we prepared for the worst. Beer, we figured, would be fifty cents a glass, eggs a dollar a throw, and conversation correspondingly high. Everybody was gloomy but Sylvester, the band leader, who had been rehearsing "Sambre et Meuse" for more than a year in the hope of springing it on some incontestably significant occasion. Here it was, right in the Big Wop's mitt. We were liberating a town—a Belgian town! His chest bulged out like a medicine ball; he threw out his drum major's staff and whistled.

Forty bugles, flashing banners of crimson silk, shot into the air. The drums began to roll. A shivering ta-ta-tee-ta shook the narrow streets. The remaining sixty instruments of the band crashed into the tune. The horses began to waltz, and up from the town came a shout.

That was one tune they hadn't heard for more than four years. Old men with funny hats stood in the streets and wept. The women rushed from the houses bawling louder than the men. They broke the swinging ranks to throw their arms around us and call us saviours. It was embarrassing and not in the least what we had expected.

The column halted in the middle of the town while the colours were carried through the weeping Belgians and planted in the square. Sylvester, crazed by popularity, kept the band playing "Sambre et Meuse" until the buglers were bushed. Meanwhile he waved his baton and submitted to a great deal of personal kissing. Several bandsmen, wishing to participate in this feature, were restrained by Mr. Sylvester.

It was a field day likewise for the little Greek, who had never seen so many women since he concealed himself in a trunk in 1914 and was smuggled into a women's hotel in New York. He now dived headlong into the mob, kissing right and left; pausing only to resist such Belgian gentlemen who attempted to kiss *him*. After thirty minutes of continuous "Sambre et Meuse" Sylvester stopped, wept, and commenced the "Marseillaise," another old stand-by. A new set of cheers went up. The kissing became frantic.

The Greek's blouse buttons were falling in windrows. With difficulty Sylvester was induced to desist and Colonel Reilly got a chance to speak. He was quite pro-Ally in his remarks and conveyed that we were very glad to be in Belgium. The burgomeister replied that we were saviours. The people said we were saviours. By that time they were tacking up signs. The signs said we were saviours. Gradually we disbanded, put the horses to bed, and prepared to see the town.

Another shock: In all the stores and cafés the foolish Belgians announced that everything was free—free! Bottles of wine and fire water appeared from cisterns and chimneys, where they had been hidden from the thirsty Teuts. Going completely mad, the Belgies now insisted that we sleep in their feather beds. We were considerably disturbed by this suggestion. We tried to explain that we were as lousy as Marines in peace time, but that made no difference. We were saviours—and should sleep in feather beds.

In the end we had to accept, although most saviours waited until their hosts had retired and then curled up on the floor. Not that we were sensitive spirits, but the sensation of sinking for the third time in a bottomless pile of feathers is not for youths who have been sleeping on boards, rocks, flatcars, and such.

Reluctantly we marched *nach Rheinland* in the morning, and farewells were as intimate as if we had lived in St. Leger all of our lives and played on the local baseball team. For the first time the war was getting good. It took a team of horses to separate the little Greek from a large woman he met at the last minute after a night of repeated and bitter disappointments.

Arlon was next, and more incredible than St. Leger. Children ran from the town to meet us with the same college yell—saviours! The cobbled streets were strewn with flowers. From every window hung heartbreaking imitations of the Stars and Stripes—flapping squares of red, white, and blue, hurriedly sewn together with no regard for design. Red dresses torn into strips and stretched over white pants, with a section of blue polka dot material for stars. Bed sheets painted in the pattern of Old Glory. Many a hard-boiled egg suddenly felt that Old Glory was something to fight for or die for or something. The demonstration had been organized in four hours, on the heels of the retreating Germans.

Again Sylvester crashed into "Sambre et Meuse."

Again the tears. Again the Belgians burst through the ranks, and the kissing started up worse than ever. The town was ours.

Here the little Greek behaved like a cobra. He completely misunderstood every manifestation of gratitude and proceeded warmly to the waltz. Soon women were flying in droves, with the Greek in eager pursuit.

We tied him in the gun park and visited the people of Arlon in the right way, sitting in their parlours looking at stereopticons, dazzling them with stories of the Woolworth Building, singing, drinking, and proposing honourable marriage.

Several of the most gifted and popular ladies of Arlon had secretly commenced the study of English when the news leaked out that America was at war. A glamorous idea, except that their difficulties with idioms led to appalling situations. Thus, a Miss B——, intending to offer her family's roof to the hair-trigger Greek, unintentionally offered All. His enthusiastic "yes!!!" broke windowpanes four blocks away, and we had to tie him up again.

It was fitting that our good time would be resented by the General Staff. Early in the morning we were rolled out and ordered ahead to make room for generals and their friends. Colonel Reilly protested on our behalf, especially as we were ordered to stay a week in the neighbourhood, but he was talking to himself. So again the band played "Sombre et Meuse" and we started out with the entire town marching abreast of the column.

One sentimentalist had pushed a hundred-franc note under his breakfast plate before quitting the pleasant premises of Granny Dulcos. She discovered the gift just as we were starting and came tearing down the march, gray hair flying, assisted by her son. Throwing herself on the giver she wheezed that he had been very naughty to pay for his bed and board and shoved the hundred francs in his pack. A dozen rowdies kissed her good-bye, while she squealed in disapproval and delight.

We halted at a large stone building outside of town. It looked like a jail, and we picked the lock. Ah, a Heinie supply depot! When we resumed the march everybody was wearing a spiked *oberleutnant's* helmet, a bosom full of Iron Crosses, *Gott Mit Uns* belts, boots (our own were in shreds), and swell blankets. This bonanza eased the heartache of leaving Arlon. We crossed into Luxembourg, singing about Heinrich and his *Grössmamma,* which always meant that we were happy and about to raise hell.

All the towns in Luxembourg sound like tonsils. We paused at a point named Brouch, and prepared to make the best of it. After Arlon it looked like an outhouse, and the natives looked worse (if possible) than our replacements. They were a sulky and suspicious bunch of bums, and we said so. Out loud we said so.

The captain immediately halted the column and said he wished it thoroughly understood that the natives of Luxembourg were *not* bums. We could only reply that they looked like bums. He explained that they looked that way because they were Walloons, and that hereafter no natives were to be called bums—for any reason. Battery, forward!

The next batch of bums that leaned out of the windows on the line of march were told all about their being bums and then some. The captain was furious. He halted the column again and read a general order to the effect that the natives of Luxembourg were charming people, our allies, in fact; they had suffered a great deal on account of this war. He hinted that they were very sensitive and cried a great deal when nobody was looking.

It followed therefore that these shy and wistful people began gypping us before we get our packs off. On account of being our allies they used German marks for money, and the mark then wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. But try and tell that to *those* sensitive characters. They grabbed our fifty-franc notes (rated as gold), deducted thirty cents in American money for a small cup of hot mud, designated as coffee, and gave us thirty-nine bum marks in change. No thank-yous, either. In cold American dough a thimbleful of raw schnapps cost fifty cents, a belly wash of grenadine and plain water cost another fifty cents, and eggs were a dollar apiece. Luxembourg was no country: it was a night club, without any of a night club's entertaining features.

After the way we had been treated in Arlon we were pretty sore. When it became apparent that we were going to spend ten full days among such thieves we got sorer still. A few managed to flip trucks back to Arlon, but the Marines had got into town and were ruining it, as usual. To help matters the army quit serving us rations, and there was no food in the lousy country.

There were a few chickens in town. (Real chickens. All the women looked like all the men; so much so that even the Greek was discouraged.) Well, we got brooding about white meat and all and visited the burgomeister with an idea of buying a hen. He was the town's leading chicken fancier. He kindly produced a hen that had been in the family for twenty-one years, going on Lincoln's Birthday. Asked what he wanted for it he began working his fingers and kept on working them until he fell exhausted. It came to forty dollars.

There wasn't that much money in the entire battery, and we were as hungry as sharks. In the middle of his remarks a significant squawk sounded from the barnyard. We took counsel and continued to bargain with the burgomeister while Porch Climber eased around to the back of the house and investigated. He walked right into a ninety-pound duck. The duck saw through Porch Climber's affected nonchalance in a second and waddled warily toward the barn. It was a situation for strategy. By means of winks, Y. M. C. A. cookies, and soft words Porch tried to get within working distance without a lot of unnecessary squawks.

Porch tried guile. He pretended to be reading a letter from his girl. The duck was too smart and backed farther away, laying an egg at every step. Obviously, she was trying to get around to where the mayor was practising his arithmetic. Porch dropped all pretence and plunged. The duck promptly caught him on the button with her bill. Porch Climber sailed his steel helmet and caught the duck just where and when she was about to lay another egg. A series of horrible honks followed. The burgomeister heard and, screaming louder than the duck, charged for the back yard. We downed him on his ten-yard line in the presence of Porch, who had caught the animal by one wing and was clouting hard with his right. He yelled at the prostrate mayor that he had been minding his own business, bothering nobody, when the duck began to attack him; that it was self-defense, pure and simple, and that if anybody wanted to sue, let them.

The mayor fainted. We carried him back to the house. Several of the boys rushed to Porch's rescue and slugged his feathered friend silly. We hacked its head off and later threw the bones in the mayor's yard.

Thanksgiving was coming, which meant nothing to us, rations still being corned beef and the little Greek being what he was. (The Lady in No. 11 had the brass to arrange several empty corned-willie cans right on her window sills as flower pots.) So we decided to buy a pig. Nick Scheuyer discovered that he was born three miles from Brouch—you couldn't keep anything from Nick—and that his old man still lived there. He sneaked over and said hello. When he came back he announced that his father owned an amazing pig that he would be willing to sacrifice for three hundred and sixty dollars, American money. Apparently the pig could read, write, and play the piano.

Well, it was for Thanksgiving, and Nick had always been a good fellow, and we were hearing talk about Prohibition in America. So we bought the pig with almost everything in the mess fund, then killed it right away for fear it would catch some disease and die before we could eat it. For two happy days we sat around admiring the body, conniving with the Greek for favourite cuts, and repressing his tendencies to trade a tenderloin for sweet affirmatives off anybody under sixty. All in all, it was a swell pig, with everything a pig should have.

Inflamed by prospects of food we went the limit and gave a musical comedy composed the evening before by a committee of authors. The play was produced in the opera house with costumes cut from parlour curtains belonging to the officers' billets. Eight large soldiers composed the chorus, having made themselves alluring by stuffing newspapers into ankle-length underwear. The parlour curtains were arranged as scarves. Otherwise a vast, hairy nudity obtained from shoulders to waistlines. Curious designs were painted on same at the last minute.

The plot of the musical comedy was very simple, being the story of our participation in the Great War. Everybody wanted to be the captain. The rôle fell to Ken Hoy after a fist fight with Rush Dyer, who got to be Lieutenant Skinner instead. Very likely the play would have flopped on this account, had not Rush discovered that Lieutenant Skinner was far and away the best part. The night after Thanksgiving the band was imported from the next town, footlights were arranged by shading candles with tin hats, and the whole town turned out to see "The Intimate Anatomy of a Horse," as the piece was called.

Foolishly the officers invited the ladies of Brouch to attend. (The tropics *get* you in Luxembourg.) When the opening chorus finally appeared at nine-thirty the town ladies walked out in a body. The officers remained until the first curtain. By that time the boys were beginning to extemporize on certain little weaknesses and incidents that the commissioned element had neither noticed about themselves nor remembered—all the incidents having taken place on the front. The show went big with the men, who paused in their schnapps drinking long enough to remind the actors of missing details.

The second act was a wow—then Rush got temperamental. He had pried one of his admirers loose from a bottle of *coneyack* during the earlier portion of the play and now proposed to rewrite the last act in such a mannur that the officers might be shown up in their true colours. His idea was that Act III should take place in Washington with all the officers down and out and begging nickels from the enlisted men, who were to be represented as very rich and high in the esteem of society girls, statesmen, and actresses. The revisions were made in three quarters of an hour (while the audience waited), the set was announced as the interior of a Washington night club, and all was well until Frau Schuettler recognized her curtains on some of the cast. She had to be restrained until the play was brought to a kaleidoscopic finish, with authors, audience, Mrs. Schuettler, and Rush battling on the open stage. Audience and cast were as blind as nanny goats long before the curtain fell, and nobody knew the exact ending of the drama, except that it was all very beautiful and sad.

The officers were still mad the next day and heartlessly hustled us off for Germany, kicking us out at four in the morning when they knew we couldn't start earlier than noon. We hit the old Roman road and snaked through the city of Luxembourg, bands playing, heads pounding from hangovers, and eyes squarely right as we swung past the ducal palace, on the balcony of which stood John J. Pershing, up to his ears in duchesses. The one on his left was an elegant number.

Echternach and the German frontier. We paused to let the movie man go to work on the officers. We were crossing the frontier, and apparently crossing frontiers was important. At least, the officers thought so. They made every excuse to get into camera range except that they had forgotten their umbrellas. We sodden heroes had other things to do—like finding out where the nearest saloon was. By a sheer stroke of luck we found one with a bock sign in the window. An hour later the captain trapped us on the red plush cushions. (We had left our heavy telltale packs outside.) We showed him the bock beer sign, but he was not impressed, although it represented a goat in the act of hurdling a barrel at the instance of a king. The king wore a crown and waved a scuttle of suds.

The captain called attention and announced that all of us were under arrest; though all of us had been under arrest for months. Following this cruel and inhuman punishment he made a slight speech to prove:

1. That in fifteen minutes we would be on German soil.

2. That the Germans were mad at America. (He didn't say why.)

3. That it would be fatal for Americans to get drunk in Germany. Any patriotic German would murder us in our cups.

4. It would be well, for once, not to chase women, because they carried guns in their pants pockets.

5. Fraternizing would be severely punished.

Fraternizing was a new word on most of us, to whom it signified The Worst. (The little Greek let out a yell as if hit.) The rest of us decided that the captain meant well and should be allowed to get away with it.

Ta-ta-de-ta! That would be Sylvester. We buckled our packs and slogged in route order across a narrow stone bridge, spitting in the river for luck. Movie cameras cranked. We pretended not to look. Two hundred steps and we were in *Deutschland, Deutschland, über Alles!*

CHAPTER XIII

After all that talk about the Germans being such hellers that they thought nothing of shooting an American and taking his scalp home to the kiddies we crossed the frontier and found six apple-cheeked aldermen waiting to receive us—a charming set of beer bellies, beaming with virtue and loving-kindness. The six wore Prince Albert coats and high silk hats, which they began to tip.

They produced some high-school diplomas from their bosoms and began reading them to the colonel. At any moment we expected them to burst forth with "Sweet Adeline," or "Ach, du lieber Augustine!" and the boys began reaching for pennies to throw. Apparently the captain's cannibal jokes were on us.

But no, as the French have it. Following the fat men's remarks and another fit of hat tipping the captain pulled himself together and advised us that this welcome business was the most transparent and contemptible form of camouflage. He intimated that it was a vaudeville act and that the real Germans were behind bushes filing their teeth and drinking blood. Thus reassured, we moved forward, stepping high and dressing for the benefit of the Pathé Weekly boys.

But as we swept through village after village and found welcome after welcome wherever we went, curiosity became acute. Maybe these Krauts were on the square. Maybe we could mooch a couple of spuds off them, for instance, or a bottle of *vin rouge*. The captain overheard these maybes and gave us the low-down all over again.

It was a trap, he said, as the first man to fraternize would find out. We fell for this hooey once more and at the first halt set up the machine guns in a lady's front yard, determined to sell our lives as dearly as possible.

All would have been well if a rooster hadn't walked past the sights of the second gun. Rush Dyer, never a fellow of any particular restraint, let fly, and the rooster was no more. The captain rushed out with a forkful of corned willie and there was an epileptic fifteen minutes. Rush explained that he was only demonstrating his marksmanship to a treacherous enemy, but it did no good. The captain put him under arrest, swept up the rooster, and appeared an hour later pulling wishbones with Lieutenant Brewer. Nor were our brave officers loath to get cozy with the female element on the pretence of engaging rooms.

Well, there wasn't a man in the outfit who was afraid of following his officers, and in ten minutes we had canvassed the town. Some interesting discoveries were made. One was that the German ladies had been without soap for several years and to obtain a bar would do almost anything. Some would do anything.

There was an immediate stampede for the kitchen, where huge boxes of soap had been stored inviolate for months. For once we caught the foul Greek asleep at the switch. Some Athens newspapers had caught up with the regiment, and he was deep in their perusal, talking to himself.

He passed out the soap absent-mindedly, never dreaming that he was giving away a gold mine. He seemed pleased to get rid of it, on the contrary, and remained pleased until he had finished his newspaper, shaved in the coffee water, and embarked on his nocturnal werewolf rounds—only to find the entire town bathing or something. Subsequent Greek screams kept everybody awake all night. The next morning the bacon was rubber. Revenge reaches its limits among Greeks.

Now that the war was over the Y. M. C. A. began to function in the matter of chocolate—at twenty cents the bar. A happy circumstance, since the fräuleins were glutted with soap and had turned their minds to candy. We again gave away a million dollars of it before we knew what it was worth.

Some of the boys were so balmy as to pass out large hunks of chocolate to several old men who immediately competed with us in its natural distribution.

As we marched onward from Alsdorf into virgin territory we became more prudent and rationed both the chocolate and soap a half a bar at a time. There was no point in turning the fräuleins' heads.

The war would have been elegant at this stage if it had not been for lamentable insistence of the officers on IRON DISCIPLINE, their one bug since the Armistice. They were counselled in this matter by a large major general who came hustling from the rear to replace our hell-to-breakfast brigadier, Douglas MacArthur (a baby who could spit nickels and chase Germans as well as any doughboy). The new general was a large pink man with President Taft moustachios.

This general had a passion for neatness and loved to hide in doorways as the regiment went by, bulging out whenever he spotted a soldier who had lost a button in a year's arduous campaigning. The general got his fun in seizing the soldier and fining him thirty dollars ($30); and he never slept well until he had caught a hundred soldiers a day. A hundred was Bogie apparently.

The officers subscribed enthusiastically to his ardour, and the war became a big game of button, button. Since the thirty-dollar fine automatically precluded leaves of absence, crap games, serious drinking, and everything worthwhile—and since the button game rapidly became a pogrom—there were not many bonds between the division and our new general, who kept getting decorated at every stop for our brilliant work in the war. (Before we had reached the Rhine he had to hire two dog robbers to wear all the medals with which the French were caught short when the Armistice was signed.) So many button fines were recorded that we would have been S. O. L. if money had been worth anything. Fortunately legal tender was still soap and chocolate, although the supply of both became more and more limited as officers and Y. M. C. A. men got next to the racket.

Another master stroke toward the achievement of IRON DISCIPLINE was the establishment of a noncommissioned officers' mess. This stunt had already been tried in the Champagne, when the Germans rightly broke it up with a shell. Its reappearance now was succeeded by amazement and indignation. The noncoms owed their warrants to the grace of the battery as much as to the authority of Congress, and we considered their proposed isolation as a bit of cheek. We hoped that they would have the good taste to decline the proposition.

But your true noncom has his chevrons tattooed on his arm. They couldn't wait to have breakfast together, strolling into the appointed house like so many Vassar girls. The midday mess was at one o'clock. We acted with the dreadful swiftness of lightning, swooping down on the kitchen and wrecking it.

Steaks had been cut for their dinner in place of our habitual slum. We stuffed them in our overcoat pockets and repaired to the house of a lady who claimed to be a great hand at steaks. On her solemn assurance we exhumed our prizes, well breaded with Bull Durham, chewing gum, and olive-drab threads, and scraped them off. The lady bade us return in an hour, when they would be cooked exquisitely, with *Kartoffel*. But on our eager return the frowsy German mutt had *boiled* them! There was no more talk of a noncoms' mess, however.

In Bittenburg, our third stop, we ran into real German beer, a little watery for the famine in grain but still far superior to the slops made by the Frogs. Here, too, the whole complexion of the war changed with the discovery of *Eierkuchen*, or German waffles. With a helmet full of flour and a little corn syrup any *Hausfrau* could produce an elegant set of waffles. *Eierkuchen* became so highly esteemed that the very name was transferred to anything that looked appetizing, especially young women.

It was natural that the supplies of chocolate and soap should run out owing to Greek passion and ration raids that were being made far to the rear by Americans just entering upon German soil. White flour was the next best thing, accomplishing wonders among a people who had been subsisting for nearly five years on sour black bread.

Unhappily the Greek knew his groceries by this time, and for several days the black-bread joke was on *us*, while certain native ladies played snowman and took baths in white flour. The only way we could break the blockade was to commit misdemeanours sure to get us on kitchen police; in which matter the captain was forehanded enough to make kitchen police the reward for clean guns, etc., while the little Greek took to sleeping on the flour and posting a guard whenever he set out with his little paper bags of manna. For several days he flourished, and no amount of personal charm demonstrated by the battery Romeos prevailed with the hungry natives. We got the frying pan and he kept the gold mine, so to speak.

We scuffed through Lissengen, Gerolstein, and Pelm. A carload of buttons had been rushed from the rear by orders of the general and, sick and tired of playing his silly games, we evolved a game of our own, which was to torture the top sergeant until he revealed the name of the town we were to occupy that night, whereupon we hid in haymows until the battery slogged out.

It was then possible to hitch trucks bound in the same direction: a hazardous accomplishment, as the truck drivers were often surly or green on their geography, and the captain developed an instinct to search every vehicle that passed the battery on the march. Still, it was possible by rolling up in stinking horse blankets and enduring compound fractures of the skull and back every time the truck hit a rock on the road. In the end it was worth it, as we beat the battery into town by a good five hours and were sparking the women as if we didn't know that fraternization was still punishable by thirty years in Fort Leavenworth.

Meanwhile the possibility of dirty work on the part of our German friends had never left the captain's mind. When the rattle of gunfire sounded as the battery marched into the town of Nohn one day his worst apprehensions were at once confirmed. The Heinies were turning, at last! Sniping had begun! With a brusque "Batt-ree A-*ten*-SHUN!" he commanded the guns to be unlimbered and turned at point-blank ranges. Then, with a trusted fearless few, he sneaked up on the town, pistols drawn. The dauntless heroes traced the shooting to the back yard of one Mrs. Rodenbach, after breaking down her front door.

Sure enough, there was a Prussian Guardsman, firing wildly. Treachery! Insurrection! Rapine! . . . Except that in one corner of the yard, very stewed, sat Mr. Earl Thomas, a member of the battery. He had beaten his colleagues into town on a bread truck and was employing his spare time in convincing Herr Corporal Rodenbach that the American tin helmet was far superior to the coal bucket apparatus favoured by the Germans. To prove his point he had hung Rodenbach's helmet and his own to a clothespost, and loaned the savage Hun a

.45 automatic for the purpose of puncturing one and not the other. Earl was nothing if not fair.

Nor was this outrage enough. Contemplating the merits of his helmet Mr. Thomas gnawed on a hunk of blood sausage (gift of the doubtless treacherous Mrs. Rodenbach), the while adjuring his former enemy to take the sand out of his eyes and ride that gun. Seemingly Mr. Thomas was unaware that his false friend Rodenbach had pledged himself to the extermination of all Americans. Seemingly Herr Rodenbach was unaware of this, also. But the captain was not. He accused Earl of risking the lives of his comrades, demanded that he spit out the blood sausage, and caused him to march in front of the column all the way to the Rhine as punishment. For days the captain waited for him to die of blood-sausage poisoning and was disgusted when he didn't.

At Quiddlebach, the next stop, word reached us by a process of grapevine more wonderful than radio that Nick Richmond, in a hospital on the other side of Europe, had gained a boat and was sailing home. Rowdy cheers succeeded this announcement. Nick had been a splendid soldier, even by the captain's standard. But in Luxembourg, the war being over and all, he had the misfortune to make a remark that was considered rude by a greasy second lieutenant who had joined the outfit a few days before, fresh from home and the ribbon counter. The remark was rude, all right; only most of us felt that it wasn't rude enough.

Consequence: The second lieutenant, a born floor walker, turned him in. It was at the height of the IRON DISCIPLINE fever, and the officers decided to make a test case. Despite Nick's excellent record he was ordered to report to the Labour Battalion, ordained for victims of venereal disease and perpetrators of Indescribable Offenses. Nick heard the sentence and returned to the second lieutenant. Saluting, he explained that he had neglected a few items in his remarks of the other day, as follows:

1. The lieutenant was a so-and-so-and-so-and-so.

2. So was his brother.

3. The lieutenant had best spend the rest of his life in an armoured tank for the reason that Private Richmond, at a not too distant date, intended to cut his heart out and eat it with salt and pepper.

With these few remarks Nick ran like a whitehead for the medical department and conferred briefly with Doc Rollins, the pearl among physicians. The doc hastily tagged him as typhoid and shot him out a back way to the base hospital in the fastest ambulance he had. From there Nick was transshipped home. When the whisper ran across France and into Germany that he was safe we were so delighted that several visited Doc Rollins and let him inoculate them with lockjaw serum, his peculiar ruling passion.

We walked some more—hitching rides had become disastrous since several members of the battery had landed under arrest in the British sector. And in the course of walking, we ran into some beautiful scenery. Picture-postcard mountains, terraced to the sky with Jack-in-the-Beanstalk grapevines; musical-comedy Schlosses; musical-comedy towns. Finally, we walked into Dernau and had a chair. It was time. December 15th, and we had been walking for a month.

The principal industry of Dernau, before our arrival, was the manufacture of wine. Just to show how Americans change everything they encounter, the principal industry of Dernau *after* our arrival was the manufacture of wine. The town itself was fifteen kilometres from the Rhine, near enough for all practical purposes; and when it was announced that we would hold it at all costs for the winter we shed all foolish ideas of ever seeing that dear America again and turned our minds to scientific pursuits—such as finding out how schnapps was really made. Apparently all one needs is a small keg, a long siphon, and two hundred soldiers. For the first time in thirty-five years the local brewery stayed open all night. In a twinkling Dernau became a boom town.

We were billeted, as usual: eight soldiers to a room, the rooms being eight by ten at the fanciest. As always, we slept on the floor; beds being reserved for officers and dog robbers. This condition obtained until morning, when the more enterprising went house hunting. By bribery and coercion four or five private rooms became available, but it was not for days that the best method of seeking shelter was revealed.

It was all quite accidental. Shortly after we reached Dernau an old *deutscher* gentleman passed away. Deaths from inanition were quite common and would have excited our sympathy if the Greek had not been quite so liberal with our groceries. However, this was the first funeral we had seen in Germany, and anybody who had never seen a funeral in Germany has missed something.

The old gentleman's coffin was a pentagonal affair, form fitting, and reposed in an old-fashioned surrey equipped with real plumes. Then the mourners, who followed the hearse in rented silk hats, trailing yards of crêpe. The procession met our gaze as we emerged, early on the third morning, from the intimate reaches of the brewery. Immediately Buck Byers burst into one of the popular chants of his alma mater, the University of Illinois:

"Do you ever think
As a hearse rolls by . . ."

By this time he had joined the mourners, together with a dozen irresponsible companions.

"That it won't be long
Before you and I
Go rolling past
In a big black hack,
And we won't be thinking
Of coming back?"

And so forth for eighteen verses, as they paced sedately in the wake of the corpse. Lest this bogus show of grief seem rude it might be mentioned that the bona-fide mourners were greatly touched. They burst into floods of tears and hailed Buck and his fellow drinkers as real rough-weather *Kameraden.* Indeed, the chief mourner was so moved that he asked Buck where he lived. On learning of our housing conditions he pointed to the corpse and signified in vile pantomime that where there was a *tot Mann* there was an empty room, with a big feather bed.

Buck broke all track records back to town and reached Number 11, Coblenzstrasse, where his happiest hopes were realized. The heirs and assigns of the old gentleman admitted that there was a room and a bed, and if Buck would wait while they changed Grandpa's mattress, it would be his for the nominal sum of twelve marks a week. Mr. Byers would not wait. He was a little superstitious about things like billeting officers and presently was seen wandering through the tenement district, inviting all the boys to come up to his ROOMS for a slight drink.

That pointed the way. Thereafter, whenever we saw anything that vaguely looked like a funeral the boys broke ranks and stampeded like buffaloes. The Germans were dying like flies, more is the pity. But it is an ill wind, they say, that blows no good, and two wrongs gather no moss. We slept.

Discovering that we were going to have some fun, if they weren't very careful, the officers devised ways and means to prevent it. It was "double drill and no canteen" for quite a while. Furthermore, a new second lieutenant with a size 13 collar (that he could pull his head through, turtle fashion) visited the brewery and informed Adolph that hereafter he would have to close his establishment at five in the afternoon. The Germans have a profound respect for authority, and Adolph took the lieutenant seriously. It was futile to explain to Adolph that the lieutenant meant five in the morning.

What made the order double-pronged and cruel was that Herb Mooney had that very afternoon discovered and swiped a crate of genuine California lemons from the officers' mess and that night had planned to give lessons in the art of mixing drinks. Don Coe, Slim O'Meara, and a few others, addicted to Mooney, assisted him in reopening the brewery, and presently the drinking was something terrible. Discretion was employed for about an hour, when Mooney wantonly cleared his throat and burst into: "That Tumble Down Shack in Athlone," weeping as he sang.

Now, it is a well-known fact that no tenor can be interrupted when he is weeping and singing, and although feet were pounding on the gravel walk that gave ingress to the brewery, although those flat feet could belong only to officers, none of us could deter the A. E. F. Caruso. It was one of those big spiritual moments with him. So he leaned the harder on the high notes, and hostile fists—officers' fists—pounded the louder against the door.

Doubtless the roll call at Leavenworth would have been greatly enriched if a fit of genius had not descended on Private Coe at the critical second. Almost without thinking, he rushed for the used lemon rinds and pared off the ends. These he placed on the shoulders of all present, his own among them, and ceremoniously opened the door.

Two second lieutenants burst into the brewery, Old Glory and Gettysburg burning in their eyes. But what did they see? Twelve majors (the lemon ends looking more like a major's golden leaves than the golden leaves themselves) occupying their time as majors have been accustomed to do since 1776. It might have been a majors' club for all they knew. They snapped to attention at once, while Mooney swooned down all the staircases of melody with:

"Let me pil-low my head
On a wee trundle bed.
Let me see my dear mothah once mo-er!"

The lieutenants had the tact to applaud and apologize profusely for their intrusion. They explained that a lot of privates had been raising hell around that particular brewery. Joie Percival, acting as spokesman, realized the ambition of a lifetime by denouncing the lieutenants as kidney-footed roundheads, ninety-day wonders, and all the prevalent and unprintable expressions usually reserved for Marines. The *next* time, Joie said, he would have to be very severe with them. The lieutenants retired precipitately, still apologizing; while Mr. Mooney, oblivious to all that had gone on, rendered: "The French They Are a Funny Race."

The women of Dernau were not so hot, but we were accustomed to hard luck by that time and old in the Hindu practice of making the best of things. Our first job was to hobble the little Greek, which we did very simply by announcing that he had leprosy or something. Women shunned him from that moment on, no matter what stolen groceries he attempted to force down their necks. We ate better in consequence.

There was one weenie named Veronica who was true to the 2d Section; and another girl called Kleiner, because she was little but resigned. A certain major was in hot competition with the boys in the matter of Kleiner, which caused her to become known as The Officer's Mess. He got nowhere, however. We had some things to say about majors, too—what those gold leaves meant, for instance. Kleiner remained the favourite until a disinterested admirer caught her using his tooth brush. Given the third degree she admitted having used everybody's toothbrush from time to time. Ever after it was felt that Kleiner couldn't be trusted.

Christmas was coming, and the optimistic few who had spent Armistice Day betting that we would be home by January 1st began selling their chances short. We had been horribly broke for a month, owing to fines, when an amazing institution arose within the outfit. John Pierpont Morgan Snowhook, assistant to the chaplain, founded a bank!

It was the nucleus to a larger affair, to be established in Chicago on our return home—Johnny figuring that three thousand regimental depositors would make even an Armenian relief fund go and that where there was a will there was a way, etc. Naturally the bank was called the One Hundred and Forty-ninth Field Artillery Home Trust and Savings Company. With a name like that behind us a few deposited and many borrowed and the bank flourished until someone got stewed one night and renamed it the Gott Mit Uns Bank. It made no difference that the inventor of this ominous name had been turned down on a loan by the kindly Snowhook. Gott Mit Uns is no name for a bank. Troubled glances were exchanged. Ugly suspicions grew. A regular Cherry Street run developed, and Mr. Snowhook's institution failed. Just before Christmas, too.

Christmas dawned none the less—a White Christmas. "Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried the happy soldiers as they staggered out at 5 A. M. and slopped through two feet of wet snow to the picket lines. "Three cheers for Congress!" they yelled, as they filled the horses' nose bags with Christmas goodies and snowballed the lieutenant in charge. Thereafter we watered and groomed and stood up to a hearty breakfast of rubber bacon and cold coffee grounds, unmitigated by sugar or condensed milk, while we talked of all the nice surprises we would like to put in General Pershing's stocking.

After breakfast we looked into our own stockings. The top sergeant made distribution of Christmas packages that had been accumulating in his office for several days. Surprise! Many of the bundles had been requisitioned the year before. They were loaded with the usual tripe recommended by the practical War Department: mittens, corned-beef hash, etc.

However, there were some candy and cigarettes and several letters, loaded with American money. Also the Y. M. C. A. unexpectedly got a rush of Christmas to the head and put out a small bar of chocolate and a bag of cookies apiece—free. It was a highly satisfactory day, all things considered, particularly as the Christmas presents of the absent wounded and detached made a respectable dividend. And finally there was a pig dinner which took place in the opera house amid holly and pine branches.

Following this orgy the horses were swept and fed and kicked in the pants, thus clearing the deck for a *real* celebration. One of the boys came home from the hospital in the middle of the horse havoc and found his Christmas presents consumed—he had been thinking about them all the way from Marseilles. We quit grooming and retrieved some of the left-overs from the German population, which had been showered with gifts. Gradually he was placated.

The celebration that night was wilful and premeditated. Before it started the town crier was deprived of his drum, and a committee toured the streets beating a tattoo in front of every house and solemnly advising the inhabitants to keep indoors. They were informed that a *grosse spektakel* was impending, featuring *viel fenster breaken* and disorderly conduct. And to prove it the last echoes of the drum had hardly died on the vine-clad hills of the Rhine before Mr. Pokey Knott of A Battery arrived on a foaming steed, as fried as a goat. Pokey wanted to sing "The Cowboy's Lament," but he got no further than "I've lived in the saddle" when he unexpectedly collapsed and passed out. So that he would not worry when he awoke we pulled his horse in the house after him and tied the animal to Pokey's bed. All this first-aid work on behalf of a premature brother took time, and it was nearly six o'clock before we could sit down to our own drinking.

We drank in groups of ten and twelve, rotating from group to group all through the night. The proprietors of the brewery went without dessert to meet the night's overflow. Throughout it all the officers huddled in their mess hall as if it had been the Black Hole of Calcutta.

After a great deal of music and whatnot, and a great deal of good clean fun besides, the boys finally hit their stride. A party of them shinnied up the church tower and rang the bells at midnight; it was charming to discover that all over the sector, other units had simultaneously arrived at the same idea. Toward morning Herb Mooney and Don Coe set out with axes and broke the ice in the river Ahr to give Pick Dodds and a rugged delegation of his friends a fancy diving workout. If Scrooge had been materialized for the evening he would have had ample proof of the Spirit of Christmas, Past, Present, and Future; although not as much shooting took place as had been expected. Only eight windows were broken in the entire town.

Early in the morning, with a rock fight going on in every soldier's skull, the whistle blew and we were told to pack and move on. The eternal rumour that we were going home at last came up like an old soda. It was promptly punctured by the captain who told us rather coldly that we were moving to Ringen, eight kilometres nearer the Rhine, to take *permanent* quarters. Again we learned that the reward for service is more service—and here the universal Army of Occupation remark had its origin:

"In the next war there'll be two guys missing—me and the fella that's chasing me."

CHAPTER XIV

IT'S a long time between pay days in the army, and the joys of Germany came high. Even in Ringen recreation cost jack. So much soap and chocolate had filtered into the occupied areas from the rear that both commodities were worthless. Social life was again on a gold basis.

So was beer. So was everything. And nothing in the sock but thirty dollars, minus allotments, minus insurance, minus fines, minus gambling debts; which brought the average bank roll down to a cool two bucks. Moreover the boys were getting cagey. A small loan was harder to procure than the Congressional Medal of Honour.

In this grave crisis an incipient merchant prince discovered that the Germans looked cold and in need of good warm clothes, like the army gave *us,* for instance. Simultaneously each billet became a thriving department store. Blankets were the most popular articles and brought as high as 100 marks apiece. Overcoats came to 75 marks, shoes 50 marks, and so on. In a week the quartermaster's stores were drained and we were stealing from the Canadian outfits up near Bonn. But we ate, drank, and were merry.

When there was no more to steal, some of the boys posed as military police and descended on the unhappy Germans, confiscating the blankets and selling them all over again. That meant more or less trouble and expense for the Germans—but who started the war, anyhow?

This scheme wore out, and picking again was poor. Another genius discovered that what the Germans really needed to get back on their feet was horse power. Two strong nags were promptly detached from the picket line and led far into the neutral zone. The sales force returned with many thousand marks, elegant pin money for all. Once more the welkin rang in Mustig Suffer's saloon. (Mustig's place was preferred because he could handle a fair tenor in such close harmony as went on nightly in his establishment. No trust, however; and his schnapps tasted like kerosene.)

Enriched by these unexpected revenues, we were thinking about selling a few field guns when it was suddenly announced we would need them shortly for a divisional review in honour of John J. Pershing, a general then living in Paris. Panic seized the officers at the notion of being reviewed. The event was weeks off, but they began cramming for it like a bunch of stage-struck weenies. Once more the guns were soaped and gold-plated. The horses were shaved like poodles, and every officer went importantly about, wrapped to the eyes in patriotic dreams.

We were of another mind concerning reviews. This Pershing seemed to be the guy who insulted the 26th Division, our brother outfit by some incomprehensible affinity of war. It made no difference that our going home was entirely in his hands. A committee of hoodlums from the Kansas unit at once tore through the division carrying the Fiery Cross and urging us to avenge the 26th by giving Pershing a terrific razz.

The officers heard of these parleys and quaked. They didn't want to stay in France forever, and so the supposed ringleaders were singled out for some good clean advice. Pershing, they said, was no chump. And unless we wanted to dig latrines for the next fifty years we had better keep our yaps well shut. The point was considered. Negotiations with the Kansas boys reopened. After interminable conferences, lasting days, it was decided to give the general every break; but if he insulted us, the razzing should be loud and unanimous.

Tension increased. Our waffle-fanny general got hot and bothered and sought to reaccustom his command to horses and guns by staging a sham battle on the Rhine—sham excepting that we were to fire real shells. This was carrying the joke a little too far. Our gun bores were pocked from thousands of bursts, and 75's have a cute habit of blowing up from time to time. The battle was ordered and came off in elegant style. Two men were blown to pieces, men who had endured the dirt and danger of the entire war without a scratch.

All this Buffalo Bill stuff put us in a pretty mood for Pershing. As the day of his visit came nearer at hand the boys became a little temperamental. Never has an event so simple as that review required so much preparation. Half-witted shavetails called formation three times a day and coached us in the questions that Pershing would undoubtedly ask: What were our names? Our rank? What army did we belong to? What armies were we fighting? You would think we were about to take our examinations for promotion in Sunday school or something.

The Day dawned and we marched brightly to the Rhine, forming in a great field by the river. The sun blazed down on thirty thousand helmets and ten thousand bayonets. Everywhere guidons streamed and banners blazed. It was a great sight, and we stood very straight for an hour. No Pershing. The boys got restless. Our general nervously struck up the band, composed for the occasion of nearly one hundred and fifty pieces and conducted by our own sweating Sylvester. The upward thrust of fifty bugles hung with heraldic banners and much subsequent blowing was very impressive, but so were some rabbits that tore across the field at the opening bars of "Madelon." The ranks wavered. Tin hats were shied. Our fat general was as nervous as a witch.

"Well," was the universal remark, as the hours went on and still no Pershing, "he'll wait longer than this for my vote." (It was supposed at the moment that Pershing had sneaked home to run for President.) Another hour. The boys were beginning to weave with the perspiring band. Thirty thousand men swayed in time with "Annie Rooney." At last a coil of dust far down the road proclaimed His Nibs, and Pershing whirled up in a staff car followed by many other staff cars. It looked like an automobile show.

He mounted a swell horse and caracoled about the field to the music of the band. We looked him over carefully and had to admit that even if he did give the regular army all the breaks he was a fine broth of a general. It's quite a stunt to wade into thirty thousand slightly hostile men and stand out instantly as the most impressive-looking dude in the mob.

He got tired of playing horsie after a while and dismounted, swinging along the ranks and asking sensible questions, not at all like the ones our officers had doped out for him. And as our bright majors began to fumble on such questions as: "What percentage of venereal disease have you in your command?" and were denounced for their stuttering ignorance, we found ourselves actually liking this guy.

All would have been well if he hadn't tried to make a la-de-da Y. M. C. A. speech after the inspection was all over. There were many newspapermen present, and he probably had to say Something of the

Right Nature. So in thin, carrying tones he proceeded to speak of our Women Folks at Home, how glorious, sacred, and sainted they were, how vital it was that we return to them with the same purity and high ideals that made our hearts so many little gardens during the war.

Right here rude noises began to arise from the Kansas contingent, together with much shooshing by officers. Pershing smelled a mouse and did a hurried right-about-face, fairly shouting that he was PROUD to meet this SPLEN-did division whose GLOR-ious rec-ORD had caught the imagin-ATION of the world. There was no more talk of what a young man of twenty-five ought to know. The razz subsided and did not renew itself until our general boosted his three hundred waffle-marked pounds to the improvised platform as Pershing concluded and began waving his tin hat.

"Three cheers!" he cried, happily. "Come on, fellows!"

The fellows came on, but not quite as our general expected. Pershing seemed to sense who was getting kidded, however, and sent nobody to the Firing Squad. We marched home with Sylvester slinging "Sambre et Meuse" as if his heart would break.

God was good and we were very happy. As we marched into Ringen and caught Bela Radamacher getting married behind our backs without our knowledge and consent we jumped feet first into the celebration. The bridal party hadn't quite counted on our attendance. As a matter of fact they wished heartily that we were in hell—all except the ladies, who giggled a great deal when the entire battery kissed the bride.

One of the boys insisted on playing with all the expensive opera hats that the gentlemen in the party had rented for the occasion. They were very nervous and irritable when he conceived the joke of sitting on each hat. When he came down on one that wasn't collapsible the bridegroom lost his temper entirely. To quiet him we locked all doors and poured a barrel of nuptial wine. The bridegroom tried to battle his way out, but the ladies were simply charming and got plastered as owls. We later sold the maid of honour a load of clams. That was after a delegation had kidnapped a native virtuoso on the accordion and made him perform all night.

The next morning an unbelievable order became current. We were ordered to turn in our horses and get ready to move! In the language of the flower that meant that we were going nowhere but home! For the first time since we had enlisted, the war was over. The Armistice had been a joke so long as we had to go on massaging and feeding two hundred lousy horses every day.

Naturally the news called for the celebration we should have had when the Armistice was announced.

But there was that old financial crisis again and no Santy Claus, as all salable equipment had to be checked before we could leave town. However, nearly one thousand dollars lay in the mess fund, idle. It was true that in a moment of madness we had voted to educate a French orphan with this money, but that was before we knew that we were going home. Besides, the skipper had gone to Marseilles to look at the art galleries there, and the battery was governed by one of the issue lieutenants.

We waited on this palooka and explained that Captain Stone had repented of his charitable suggestion for the improvement of orphans and now directed that the money be turned over to a committee of corporals for a small and very quiet party. The lieutenant hesitated. He had never heard of the officers encouraging parties before, but the evidence was too overwhelming. More than two hundred soldiers had heard the captain say it, and the lieutenant had to give in.

A few superstitious heroes argued that what we proposed to do was the same as stealing and would bring us bad luck, but cooler heads pointed out that a measly $1,000 wouldn't do an orphan any good. That amount of chicken feed wouldn't get anybody past third grade, especially if the orphan was goofy or backward in any way. Furthermore, what the hell good was an education? Lincoln never had any, whereas the major had gone through five colleges and look at *him*. There was no more argument.

Secret advices revealed that the rate of exchange was at once considerably better in Coblenz than Neuenahr, and a messenger was dispatched to convert the $1,000 into marks. On second thought, that was too much like giving one rabbit a leaf of lettuce to take to another rabbit and two nondrinking, trustworthy, and professing Christians were sent after him to see that he got back with the dough. Meanwhile, another committee waited on the local brewers and ascertained lowest rates and earliest deliveries.

Surely goodness and mercy were following us that day, because the messenger and his guards had no sooner reached Coblenz than the mark took its first sensational fall. Instead of returning with $1,000 worth of marks he had more thousands than we could count. And the brewery owners hadn't heard a whisper of the crash! They were still operating on yesterday's rates. Before the news leaked out, we had acquired the contents of all the neighbourhood cellars.

As many wagons backed up and emptied their loads of Christmas cheer into the Opera House the officers began to brood. Apparently the party was not going to be as quiet as they had been led to believe. So they forbade it. Foolish, foolish officers! The party was well on by that time and E Battery had been asked over to take up the slack. The two batteries converged on the Opera House like ninety-mile cyclones with a great rattling of mess cups.

Inside the Opera House door stood a bathtub, the only one in town. It had been borrowed (rather forcibly) sometime before and now brimmed with Rainbow Cocktail, our own invention. Recipe:

1 bbl. red wine
1 bbl. white wine
1 cask of *schnapps*
12 bottles lemon extract
1 pound of pepper
Leg of 1 German
Ginger to taste

The thirsty shock troops shot through the officers' mess adjoining the Opera House like bullets through a wet blanket. Soon little hands were busy scooping up the mixture. In ten minutes all had been served. In five minutes more all were blotto.

The officers gathered as the bathtub was refilled and second helpings were announced. As they hesitated Top Sergeant Geisendorfer mounted the platform and called loud and particular attention to the similarity of majors and horses in certain intimate respects. Such cheers followed his comparison that our oppressors vanished to hide under beds until the earthquake was over.

Another round was lapped up. Several toasts were proposed: The Flag, the Captain, General Pershing, National Apple Week, the Y. M. C. A., the Marines, and the Cloth. Several male quartettes got under way, all singing different selections. Three fist fights ensued. It was necessary to appoint a sergeant at arms. If this sounds rowdy it was a church supper compared to Armistice Night doings in America, if reports that reached us are true. After all, this was our first chance to celebrate, and anything worth doing is worth two in the bush.

Only lazy men sit in one place and drink, and presently various natural-born leaders were suggesting Big Things to Do. Rush Dyer gained the floor by slugging the five people nearest him and proceeded to make a speech, Indian fashion. He reminded the company that the law of the Northland was to help the weak. (Cheers.) The Manitou, he said, expected brave men to go to the rescue of the desolate and oppressed. An enormous banging of cups confirmed this statement. There were, Rush continued, many fellow braves in the guardhouse to-night. The best way to please the Great White Father was to set them loose. He burst into tears and sat down.

A terrific demonstration followed. Immediately the party swarmed into the streets, marching as to war. The officers had planted a spy in our midst and now turned out the guard under the commanding eye of a certain lieutenant whose specialty was roaring like a bull and acting like a jackass whenever possible. He was excelling himself in both accomplishments at the moment and promptly arrested the entire battery. There was some talk of grabbing the lieutenant and painting a moustache on him with burnt cork, but it occurred to the more sober element that inasmuch as he was more pickled than we were the wiser course was to march into the guardhouse full strength and take possession.

So we did, breaking open the windows and jumping out again with all the prisoners. Again we were arrested *en masse* and once more did a merry-go-round back into the street. The lieutenant, as always in a crisis, got out his gun and tried to shoot. Had he been sober there would have been some killing, including the lieutenant. But we kept cool. Somebody scraped him off, and the company marched on Peter Schlemmer's saloon, where there was a lot of important work to be done.

This Schlemmer was the single Kraut in town who hated our guts. The trouble seemed to be that there was a Mrs. Schlemmer. Mrs. Schlemmer was the original War is Hell joke. With the arrival of the Americans she took a leaf from her salad days and plumped her aging bones on the laps of as many who were not too choosey. Rush Dyer, whose reminiscences snobbishly excluded all girls who were not débutantes or theatrical stars, seemed to be the favourite of this willing lily—despite his hot denials, and Mr. S. seemed somehow to take some unreasonable antipathy to Rush. Only he took it out on us instead, closing his saloon whenever he could and beefing about American manners. Lately he had gone so far as to decorate his barroom with large prints of German victories. This was considered very tactless of Mr. Schlemmer, and we quite properly marched onward to remove them.

The doors were pushed in, and fifty 88-per-cent. Americans held matches while Rush removed the offending pictures. Suddenly a howl, and old Pete appeared in a flannel nightgown, swinging a big club. Without thinking, Rush framed on him with the first picture, giving him a very pretty necklace of broken glass. The Sandman took immediate charge of Pete.

Another howl, and the lieutenant wabbled in, pointing his gun woozily. Stanley Yuskevitch started one from the floor and caught him smack on the kisser. The lieutenant sank limply on Pete's chest. They lay there like two beautiful happy children, dreaming of Santy Claus and the pretty toys.

By degrees the Old Guard collapsed in the street or went to bed or marched onward to neighbouring communities, playing Paul Revere with the Germans. All through the night distant church bells told us the Raggedy-something Cadets were on their way. Some groups got as far as Bonn, judging from damage suits that were brought against the government later on.

In the morning there was a reckoning. The officers conferred darkly and announced that there would be hell to pay when Captain Stone got back. Everybody had a splitting headache, and the commissioned element was smart enough to sense it. They ran us bow-legged through the drill at double time. The only saving circumstances to a day of blackest horror was that we actually got rid of the horses, all but a few that had been pinched during the night for the Paul Revere act. And then there was the consoling rumour that the officious lieutenant's jaw had been broken in two places.

As further punishment the battery was confined to quarters, so all of us went to Neuenahr that night. The Y. M. C. A. had opened up a movie theatre there and reports were that it was pretty good. It *was* pretty good, but that wasn't the Y.'s fault. They were showing the oldest picture ever made—a German chromo having to do with the Suffering of Souls. As the picture was run off a soprano secretary stood on the stage and translated the subtitles.

"What will I do?" he cried, interpreting the remarks of a soul-sick German. The audience loudly obliged:

"Go down to the Y. M. C. A. They're putting out chocolate to-day!"

The secretary seemed stung. He stopped the picture.

"Now, boys," he said in a hurt voice. "Do you think that's nice?"

"Who won the war?" came back, and the entire audience howled:

"THE Y. M. C. A.!"

"Boys!" from the secretary.

"Who laid down the chocolate barrage?"

"THE Y. M. C. A.!"

"Some day I'm going to talk that over with you!" warned the secretary. There was no good answer for this, so the boys yanked the backs off the seats and threw them. The secretary dodged but stood like the boy on the burning deck, translating the remaining titles. We liked his nerve and gave him a break.

At one point in the picture the hero jumped off a thousand-foot cliff and lay mangled on the rocks below. Instantly: "Paint him with iodine and mark him 'Duty'!" from a dozen victims of the medical corps' practicalities in this regard. Several other beautifully pat comments as the picture went along do not look so well in print. Some of them were so hot that the more foghorn members of the battery returned night after night to bawl them at the psychological moment.

After the picture a Y. M. C. A. lady emerged and with many swimming motions sang a song about a fellow named Laddie; and if Laddie wasn't a bit of a sis we didn't know our onions. So we gave her the razz, too. Some went so far as to throw soap. Miss

America didn't know the rude inference and beamed with pleasure as she picked up the bars.

It's bad manners to bombard Y. M. C. A. ladies with soap, but a conspicuous minority of them had so let the war go to their heads that the innocent often suffered. God knows who selected the talent for the A. E. F. It was easy enough to do. Every second-rate chorus girl who came over and bawled bum jazz was hugged to our bosoms. They were exactly what we wanted. But what we usually got was a set of aging, la-de-da contraltos with frozen pans and semiclassical selections.

There was another type—the unsuccessful belles who busted into the auxiliary services less from patriotism (apparently) than to be the only American girls in a mob of uniforms. Officers' uniforms. And American officers notoriously will jump for anything short of a lady barber. They dated up these dolls over the field switchboards so incautiously that everybody knew who, where, and what; and it was difficult for the enlisted men to observe the proper respect for Womanhood in consequence.

Exceptions, of course; and very likely a sainted majority. We had a grand girl with us, for instance —Ted Percival, by a comical war-time coincidence the sister of our favourite in-wrong corporal, Joe. Ted made fudge, played the piano, advised us on presents, and worked her head off for all of us. She was a grand girl and all that the Y. M. C. A. had unquestionably intended their women workers to be. Joe alone was uncomfortable when Ted was around, as her presence in Ringen greatly interfered with his nightly *schnapps* swizzling in Mustig Suffer's basement.

The captain finally returned from Marseilles, very cross about his lieutenant's chin, which wasn't broken —only cracked. He summoned the battery and explained that hitting an officer was worse than anything in the world except hitting one's mother. He wasn't at all sure but that General Pershing would hear about it and keep us in Germany for six months more. Nobody was much impressed.

The lieutenant had simply poked his gun at people once too often while drinking; but we pretended to be all broken up for fear the captain would really do something tough like getting up extra drills or inspections. Besides, his threats implied that we really were going home, and that put everybody in a Christian mood.

And presently it became apparent that at last something was happening. The officers were looking entirely too pleasant not to be holding out hot stuff. Leaves were suddenly cancelled (as if anybody but the officers had ever had leave). Inspections occurred every minute. Officers of divisions in back of us came snooping around, checking on our billets and looking wise. And finally the order came to move.

It was about time. We had been away nearly two years and were sick of reading in the newspapers about all those week-end gold-brick outfits galloping home and grabbing all the credit. Going home. That involved some weird notions. Getting on a boat. Eating a stack of wheats in the Forty-second Street Childs. Wearing coats with lapels on them. Sleeping in beds. Doing what we pleased. Doing exactly what we pleased. There must have been a catch in it somewhere. And yet there we were, kicking down the hard road to Remagen! And what should be on the siding but the old box cars in which we once rode out to battle! And who should be there to tell us how to get into them but our old pal the lieutenant.

His jaw looked fine, but he seemed nutty to get it back out of joint, squawking at everybody for no reason and screaming that he would raise HELL if his orders weren't obeyed on the second. Shooting was the mildest thing he proposed. We took his remarks pleasantly—too superstitious about that train not starting to follow our heart's desire and bust his beautiful pan wide open.

Item: We had devised a large canvas sign to tack on the train in order to explain carefully to the people of France and Germany just what we thought of their charming hospitality. The sign was a real art work. Jack Walsh had sat up all night long lettering it and painting peculiar pictures on it—generals, Germans, etc. In one corner was a beautiful Rainbow; in another a map of Illinois. All of us admired it a great deal and attached it proudly to the foremost box car. The lieutenant saw it going up and had a fit of apoplexy. He gave us ten seconds to pull it down. We were so glad to be going home that we might have obeyed if the sign hadn't been so beautiful. So we stalled, explaining that it was nailed too tightly to remove.

The lieutenant reached for his ever-ready pistol and waved it. We explained that it was dangerous for people to point automatics and suggested that he put his pistol away in a safe or something mentioning where. For answer he charged wildly at the sign. We picked up half the crushed stone ballast under the train and played a fast game of Duck on the Rock with the fellow. He fled for the first-class carriages, where the officers were sitting like bankers, and bellyached loudly to the captain. The captain reported to the colonel, mentioning that we had called the lieutenant rude names.

It has been pointed out before that Reilly was a swell guy. It was now demonstrated all over again. He streaked back like a bat out of hell, and we stood respectfully at attention while he laid a wide strip of gooseflesh along every spine. But he was too swell a guy not to see our side of it, however much he concealed this impression; and in the end he bit off and spat out the following:

We were going home. He was reluctant to take the steps that our conduct called for. But, by God! there were two names for which any man would fight. The lieutenant had been called both of those names. The colonel would like to hear before the train started that the man or men calling the lieutenant those two names had apologized for them. He turned on his heel and walked back to his car. There was a hurry-up conference and a brilliant idea. A committee promptly waited on the wounded lieutenant.

He was smiling a little, if you can call stretching a basketball smiling.

"Well?" he said coldly.

Pick Dodds informed the lieutenant of the colonel's wishes.

"And are you the men who called me those names?" he demanded.

"No, sir," said Pick. "But so very many men claimed the impertinence of calling you those names—the entire battery in fact—that we thought it would be simpler to send a committee."

The lieutenant turned a bright blue. We retired to our box cars, and the train started—bottles, repartee, and Y. M. C. A. biscuits flying from the doors at every stop. Through Metz; Verdun, where we stopped and played soldier in the blood-rusty wire. Finally Paris. As usual we crept through in the night for fear that we might see a good-looking number or something. On the third day of travel we threw open the doors of our rolling rat traps and sniffed the sea. The grass was green, and the warm, wet winds of Brittany smelled something elegant. We rolled into Brest singing:

"We'll hang Old Glory to the top of the pole. . . ."

Even the horrors invented by the so-called High Command for the demoralization of first-class soldiers who had the misfortune to embark from that louse-house port could not vanquish our spirits; nor the cold, lashing rain—nor anything. In three days we were deloused and on the docks, waiting for enough calm to board the *Leviathan;* and after a glorious night out, in which we beat the hell out of five or six of the brass-knuckled boys stationed in Brest to guard morals and enforce saluting, we jammed on the lighter—so closely that the impress of coat buttons was visible on every back and belly for weeks.

Just before we embarked a stuffy Red Cross lady chided us for drinking, and Colonel Reilly nearly tore her apart with a few well-chosen words. He then made a stirring speech of farewell, actually selling us on the idea that to fight for the United States of America was a glorious privilege of a free man. As for this war-ending war, he predicted that twenty wars would be fought within our lifetime, and added that if America was involved in any one of them we would respond as gallantly and as well as we had done two years before. Furthermore, if anybody tried to sneak more than three bottles of liquor aboard ship he would damn well wish he hadn't.

So we swarmed like monkeys aboard the *Leviathan*. Her black nose butted into the blue Atlantic. We turned again home.

THE END

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